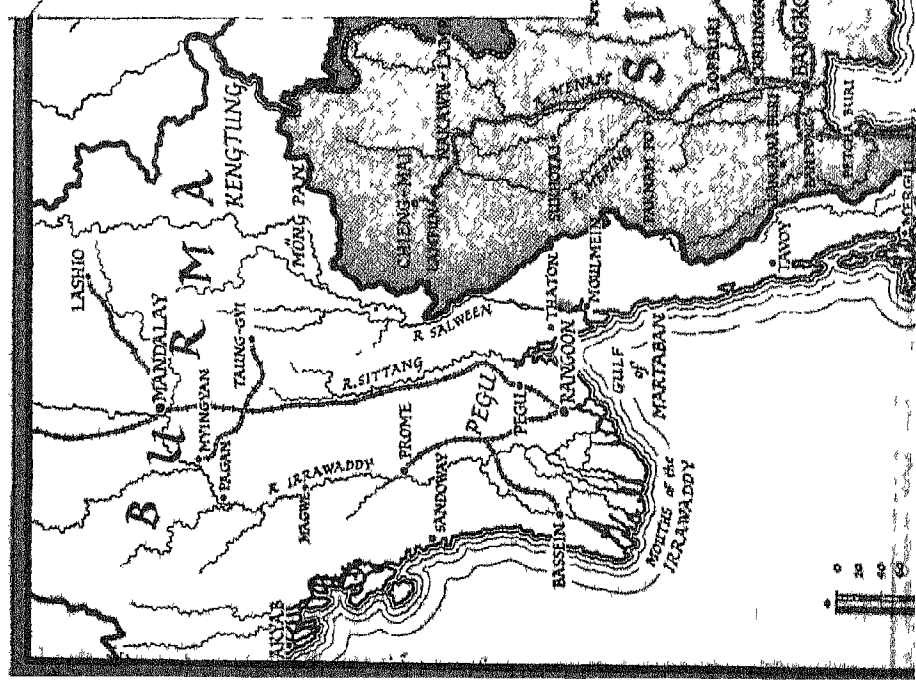
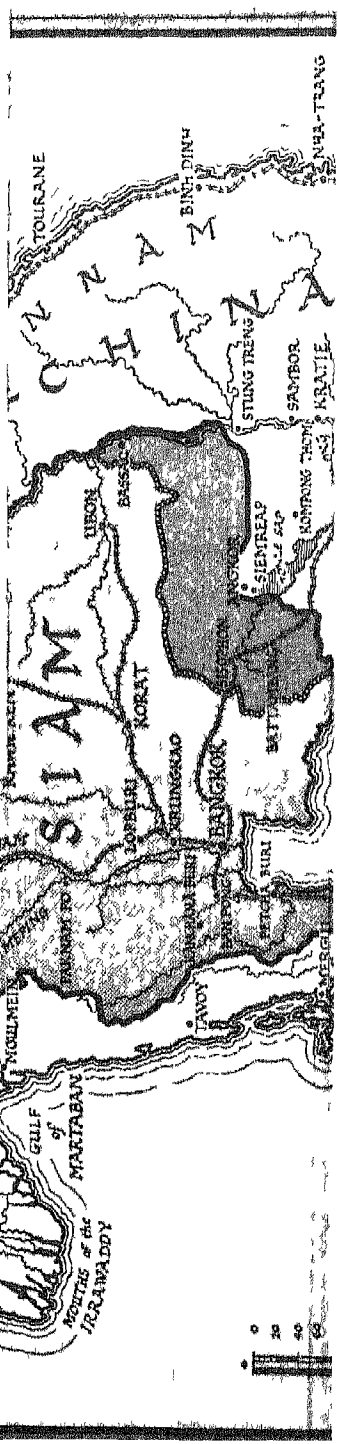


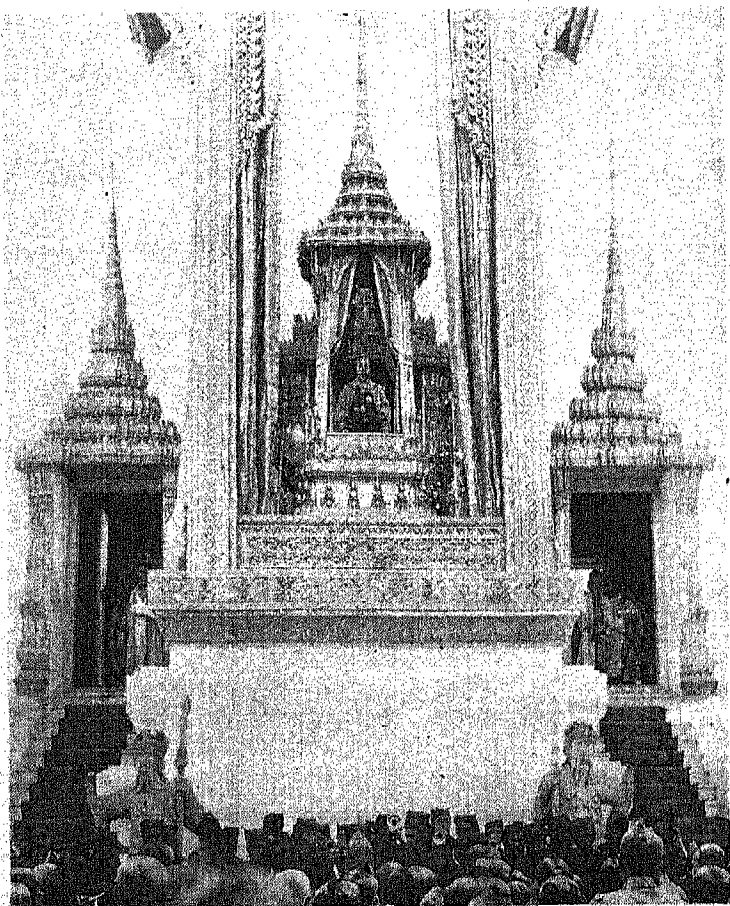
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CORONATION OF HIS MAJESTY KING RAMA VI OF SIAM
The King shows himself

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BY

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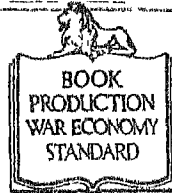
HIS MAJESTY'S MINISTER AT BANGKOK FROM 1934 TO 1941



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CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY	I

SECTION I

THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE OF SIAM

CHAPTER		
I. THE COUNTRY AND ITS STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE	7	
II. THE ORIGINS OF THE SIAMESE PEOPLE.	11	
III. HISTORICAL	14	
IV. THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF SIAM. SOCIAL CON- DITIONS	21	
V. ART, RELIGION AND NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS	27	

SECTION II

OLD SIAM

VI. CONDITIONS IN THE OLD SIAM	32
VII. CONDITIONS IN THE OLD SIAM (<i>continued</i>)	40
VIII. SOME PERSONALITIES IN THE OLD SIAM	45

SECTION III

SIAM AND THE GREAT POWERS

IX. GENERAL	50
X. RELATIONS WITH GREAT BRITAIN	53
XI. RELATIONS WITH FRANCE	59
XII. SIAM AND JAPAN	62
XIII. SIAM AND CHINA	70

SECTION IV

THE PRESENT-DAY SIAM

CHAPTER	PAGE
XIV. THE REVOLUTION OF 24TH JUNE, 1932	77
XV. THE RISE AND DECLINE OF CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT IN SIAM	82
XVI. CHANGED CONDITIONS IN THE NEW SIAM	92
XVII. PERSONALITIES IN THE NEW SIAM	100
XVIII. CHAUVINISM IN THE NEW SIAM	111
XIX. THE BOUNDARY DISPUTE WITH FRENCH INDO-CHINA	117
XX. BRITAIN VERSUS JAPAN. NEUTRAL SIAM	122

SECTION V

WAR

XXI. HOW WAR CAME TO SIAM	128
XXII. INTERNMENT	140
XXIII. JUDGMENT	144

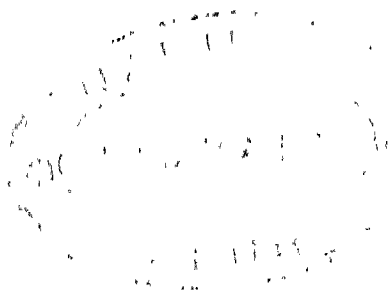
SECTION VI

LOOKING FORWARD

XXIV. THE FUTURE OF SIAM	150
XXV. THE PROBLEM OF MILITARY SECURITY	157
XXVI. THE PROBLEM OF ECONOMIC SECURITY	162
POSTSCRIPT	165
INDEX	169

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CORONATION OF HIS MAJESTY KING RAMA VI OF SIAM: THE KING SHOWS HIMSELF	<i>Frontispiece</i>
TWO SIAMESE TYPES: A HOUSE-SERVANT, A FISHERMAN	FACING PAGE 32
A CORNER OF THE ROYAL PALACE AT BANGKOK	33
A CORNER OF BANGKOK'S LARGEST TEMPLE ("WAT CHIETUPHON")	48
A CANAL SCENE AT BANGKOK	49
VISIT TO BANGKOK OF THE YOUNG KING ANANDA MAHIDOL	96
THE MINISTER'S HOUSE AT BANGKOK	97
SIGNATURE OF THE ANGLO-SIAMESE PACT OF NON-AGGRESSION	112
VISIT OF SIR SHENTON THOMAS, GOVERNOR OF THE STRAITS SETTLE- MENTS	113



INTRODUCTORY

WITH the exception of two years spent in Panama, the whole of my official career of close upon forty years has been passed in South-Eastern Asia in various consular capacities, and finally in the capacity of His Majesty's Minister at Bangkok. For eleven years of that period I served in Java as Consul-General at Batavia, and, previously to that, for two years as Consul at Saigon, in French Indo-China. The rest of the period—practically a quarter of a century—was spent, though not without interruption, in Siam. When I retired on pension in 1943, I suppose that I must have been, from the point of view of the Foreign Office, the “old man of the tribe” so far as concerns the corner of the world here in question. No other member of the Foreign Service, I believe, has been stationed so long and so continuously in that area, and it happens that the period of my service coincided with one of the most significant and interesting phases in the history of the white man in the Far East—or, rather, with two such phases and with the interval of transition which came between them. When I first went out to Bangkok as a Student Interpreter in His Majesty's Consular Service in 1904, the halcyon days of Western supremacy in Asia were not yet over, though they were drawing to an end; for the discerning eye the writing with respect to them was already on the wall. Nevertheless, in 1904, we were still in what has been named the gunboat era, when the Western Powers were both able and willing, in case of need, to summon armed force to their aid, to prevent or to redress infringements of the rights accruing to them under their Treaties with various Oriental countries. The system of juridical ex-territoriality was still applied in full force not only in China, but also in Siam (with the exception of Northern Siam, where a modified form of it had been adopted). Western prestige everywhere stood high, and had only lately been strengthened by the lesson administered to China after the anti-foreign outbreak which culminated in the Boxer Rising. The white man, in fine, was still shouldering his burden in the Far East—cheerfully, for there were manifest compensations attached to the task, but not with entire complacency, since the better class of Occidental has always been imbued with an underlying sense

of responsibility in his relations with Orientals. In 1904 the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was still in operation, and British sympathy was whole-heartedly with Japan in the war upon which she had embarked with Russia. There was then no inkling on our part of the menace to Western interests inherent in the foreign policy of Japan ; the Japanese cloud upon the horizon was as yet not even as big as a man's hand.

But this state of affairs was not to last much longer. What has been called "the rising tide of colour" or, as others would put it, "the awakening of Asia", was already in process. With the dethronement of the Emperor, and the advent of Dr. Sun Yat Sen, a new China soon came into being which demanded vociferously the abrogation of her unequal Treaties with the Western Powers ; the nationalist movement in India grew in extent and vehemence ; similar agitations were set on foot in French Indo-China and the Netherlands East Indies. The repercussions of this general condition of unrest were not unobservable in Siam, in the sense that her Government put forward urgent demands for the complete abolition of the ex-territorial system, and for the conclusion with the Foreign Powers of fresh Treaties on a basis of full reciprocity and of unfettered autonomy in tariff and all other matters. Any assumption of superiority by the white man over the Oriental came everywhere to be disputed with increasing resentment, and his prestige suffered accordingly throughout the ensuing four decades. Meanwhile, the aggressive designs of Japan were gradually becoming evident. She had begun with the attempt to dominate China, but she had gone on to preach the doctrine of Asia for the Asiatics (under her own hegemony, of course) and to threaten white supremacy in the Orient as it had never been threatened before. For the purpose of displaying the other side of the picture, it is only fair to say that in the meantime a corresponding change of attitude was being exhibited by the Western colonial Governments themselves ; the duties of the Occidental Powers towards the indigenous populations under their care were increasingly stressed, and it was acknowledged that the achievement of autonomy by the colonial peoples was the ultimate object to be kept in view.

So much for the first of the two phases mentioned above (which may conveniently be taken to have ended with the establishment of a republic in China) and for the interval of

transition which succeeded it. The second phase, only just started, began with the sudden attack by the Japanese, at the close of 1941, upon the British and American possessions in South-Eastern Asia and with the astonishingly rapid success which attended their arms thereafter in Malaya, Burma, the Netherlands East Indies and the Philippine Islands. The scarcely perceptible cloud had by then swollen to the dimensions of a thunder-cloud which had finally burst and, for the time being, white prestige was swept almost entirely away in the deluge. At the time of writing it is impossible to predict what the final shape of things will be; but it is inconceivable that Japan should be left in occupation of the territories which she has so wantonly seized and ravaged. The United Nations have announced their determination that she shall be expelled from them. The white man whom she has displaced will return to those territories, though assuredly under different auspices from those of the past. His former prestige as a superior class of being will have gone for ever; let us hope that it will be exchanged for a new prestige, in the light of which he will be regarded by the colonial peoples not as a ruler who keeps millions of them under subjection against their will, but rather as a guide and a friend who is endeavouring earnestly to speed them along the path to self-government.

It has been my lot to watch the impressive pageant of events in the Far East during the last forty years, and I have had personal experience of the changes in the local political and racial atmosphere as it passed from fair to doubtful weather and ended in a raging hurricane. In the present book it is my task to picture the Far Eastern country which I know best, namely, Siam, during this exceptional time of strain and stress. It is to be observed that, until the final *débâcle* overwhelmed us all, the reaction against Western supremacy was in her case, for reasons which will be explained, less violent in its manifestations and less far-reaching in its effects than it was elsewhere.

Until quite recently Siam has attracted the attention of the British public very little, if we except the incident of the year 1893, when she became the subject of a dispute between Britain and France which came near to causing a major war. But that was half a century ago, and it is only lately that she has entered into the limelight again, this time as a factor in the Japanese plans for acquiring the hegemony of the Far East and

for eliminating Britain as an Oriental Power. Up to then, I suppose, the average person thought of her as a remote Asiatic Kingdom producing some attractive issues of postage stamps, with a picturesque capital so intersected with canals that it had earned the name of "The Venice of the East". That, at any rate, was about all I knew of Siam myself until I went to reside there, although it should be said that there were a few of my countrymen who had acquired a certain knowledge through meeting young Siamese sent to study at some of our public schools or universities. These aroused favourable comment by reason of their good manners and, in many instances, of the high level of their intelligence.

Yet Siam deserved more attention than had thus been paid to her, for to the student of international politics she was particularly interesting as being one of the few countries upon the Asiatic continent, and the only one in South-Eastern Asia, which had been able to preserve her independence. She was, moreover, unique as being the only fully independent State in the world in which Buddhism was practised as the sole religion of the vast majority of the inhabitants, whilst to the student of ethnology she was no less interesting as the home of a people with distinctive racial and linguistic characteristics of their own which marked them off from the other populations around them. And, apart from these considerations, Siam was our neighbour in virtue of her proximity to Malaya and Burma.

Her failure to arouse a greater degree of interest in the past may, I think, be ascribed in part to the circumstance that she was not situated upon any of the main lines of communication between Europe and the Far East; she was placed in something like a *cul-de-sac* at the top of the Gulf of Siam. Bangkok, her only considerable port, was not served regularly by any of the great shipping companies and was, furthermore, unapproachable for large vessels owing to the bar at the mouth of the River Menam. But a circumstance contributing still more to her comparative obscurity at that time was the fact that, so long as British naval power was able to assert itself as the effective guardian of international peace in the Indian Ocean and South-West Pacific, Siam, contiguous though her frontiers might be with those of Burma and Malaya, did not preoccupy us very much from the point of view of the military security of those territories or of India to the west of them. Once we had com-

posed our differences with France after the events of 1893 we did not, therefore, concern ourselves very actively with Siam beyond maintaining our traditional friendly relations with her and seeking openings for our trade. It was otherwise, however, when the decline of British naval supremacy in Far Eastern waters set in and when the menacing designs of Japan, involving only too probably moves against British territory from the direction of Siam, became increasingly apparent. From that time Siam came to acquire for us an interest closer and keener than had been the case for fifty years. Within the last decade she has, indeed, been very much in the picture with us, though she has now faded out of it again temporarily on account of her tragic overlaying by the colossus of Japan. That she will enter into the picture once more as the war in South-Eastern Asia progresses goes without saying and, when the war is over, she will still retain her significance for neighbouring countries of the British Empire in the new conditions which are then likely to prevail. Meanwhile, before her quasi-occupation by the Japanese, she had come into notice also as a State in which a bloodless revolution had converted a system of absolute rule into a constitutional monarchy and (it must be regretfully added) in which the democratic experiment so begun had ended in failure and paved the way for a military dictatorship.

Since recent happenings and probable forecasts have given to Siam a prominence previously lacking, the moment has seemed opportune for writing this book. I have endeavoured in the first section to provide some basic information about the country itself and its people, their origins and history, their Government, their character and their culture, for without such knowledge the Siam of to-day cannot be properly understood or appreciated. In the second section I say something about the old Siam now passed away, which still existed when I first went to the country. The following section is devoted to a discussion of Siam's relations with the Great Powers—in her case Britain, France, Japan and China. The fourth section treats of the present-day Siam; it tells the story of the revolution of June, 1932, and of the rise and fall of Constitutional Government; it describes the altered conditions arising out of such momentous changes, deals with various manifestations of Siamese chauvinism and pictures the growing clash of interests between ourselves and the Japanese. The fifth section, by the method of personal narrative, relates

how war came in the end to Siam, and it also attempts to apportion the responsibility falling upon her—and upon others—for what then occurred. The last section looks to the future. Where relevant, I have essayed, throughout, portraits of leading personalities.

One of my chief purposes has been to give the reader some idea of what, in my experience, the Siamese are like—a kindly, tolerant people to the great majority of whom chauvinism does not come naturally; a people who have upon the whole never harboured any feeling other than friendliness towards ourselves. Another of my objects has been to set in its true perspective the deplorable fact that at this moment Siam is our enemy and is allied to Japan. It has been my desire to show that the present war against us is artificial and purposeless in the eyes of the general body of the population, with whom it has never been popular. They have no liking at all for the Japanese. Finally, I have put forward the view that, on grounds of sentiment and self-interest alike, Britain is cast for the rôle of Siam's best friend and supporter in the time that is coming, no less than she was in the past. This book is, in fact, grounded upon the seeming paradox that Siam, though to-day on the opposite side, is—in the long run and taking the broad view—to be regarded as our friend rather than our foe.

Throughout these pages there runs, too, as another *leitmotiv*, that “awakening of Asia”, that insistence by the Oriental upon being treated on terms of equality with the men of the West to which I have already alluded. It would be a mistake, however, to represent this tendency with the Siamese as being an aspect of Pan-Asiatic sentiment or as being anti-Occidental in itself.

For the rest, this book does not profess in any way to be a well-documented contribution to history. I venture to hope, nevertheless, that it may perhaps be found useful by better equipped writers in its treatment of the Siam which arose after the *coup d'état* of 1932 and of the Government at Bangkok which has made common cause with Japan. My account of these topics possesses the advantage of having been committed to paper whilst they were still fresh in the memory of one who had more than usual opportunities for observing things from the inside.

I wish to make it very clear that any opinions which I have expressed in this book are personal to myself and are in no way to be taken as representing the views of His Majesty's Government.

SECTION I

THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE OF SIAM

CHAPTER I

THE COUNTRY AND ITS STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

SIAM is a country situated within the tropics approximately between the 5th and 21st degrees of north latitude and between the 97th and 106th degrees of east longitude. On the north it adjoins the British Shan States and French Indo-China, on the east it is bounded by French Indo-China and on the west by Burma and Malaya; to the south of it is the Gulf of Siam, which opens into the China Sea. The area of the Kingdom of Siam is just under 200,000 square miles (which is roughly the area of England and France combined), and its population amounted in 1937 to between fourteen and fifteen million souls.*

With the exception of the Eastern plateau, the country is well watered. It is traversed by one of the great rivers of South-Eastern Asia, the Menam, which has a number of important tributaries and near the mouth of which is situated Bangkok, the capital (population 900,000), the only city of any size. In the region of Bangkok there is an extensive system of canals. The central portion of Siam is flat, consisting in the south of alluvial soil, and is given over to agriculture—chiefly the planting of rice. Further north there are hills and mountains largely covered with forests, though here also rice is cultivated in the river valleys and on the plains. The arid Eastern plateau is devoid of vegetation except for the pasturage which it provides for the raising of cattle. The Siamese Southern Provinces extend down the Malay Peninsula to a point south of the Isthmus of Kra, their backbone consisting of the mountain range which comes down from the

* The above figures as to area and population do not take into account territory in French Indo-China which the Vichy Government was compelled by Japan to surrender to Siam early in 1941, nor do they take into account the four British-protected Malay States of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu and the two British Shan States of Keng Tung and Mōng Pan, all of which Japan was pleased to award to the Siamese after her victorious campaigns in Malaya and Burma.

north in the neighbourhood of the frontier which separates Siam from Burma.

The climate is tropical with a high humidity. There is a hot and rainy season from April to October which corresponds to the period of the south-west monsoon. The dry season is the period of the north-east monsoon and lasts from November to March, with a comparatively cool spell in December and January.

Siam is principally an agricultural country and there are virtually no manufacturing industries. The staple product and the main article of export is rice. Teak is extracted from the forests of the north and a certain amount of rubber is grown in the southern provinces, where also a flourishing tin-mining industry has sprung up in recent years, the capital for which has been supplied mostly from the United Kingdom and Australia. Siam is now capable of furnishing an appreciable proportion of the world's consumption of tin.

The chief exports are, in order of importance, rice, tin, rubber and teak, the principal imports being textiles, foodstuffs, metal manufactures and machinery.

The railways (like the posts, telegraphs and telephones) are owned and operated by the State. Before the outbreak of war in the Far East in 1941 there were approximately 2,000 miles of Siamese railroads, all of them based upon Bangkok. They were made up of four main trunk lines as follows : the Southern Line, linking Bangkok with Penang and Singapore ; the Northern Line, which went as far as Chiangmai, the northern capital ; the short Eastern Line running to the Cambodian frontier ; and the North-Eastern Line, connecting Bangkok with Korat and other places on the border of French Indo-China in the region of the upper portion of the River Mekong.

Until recently there were very few roads indeed, but the Government has now embarked upon an extensive programme of highway construction.

By 1941 Bangkok had become a sort of Clapham Junction of the air as regards civil aviation. The British Overseas Airways Corporation operated services via Bangkok between England on the one hand and Singapore, Australia and Hong Kong on the other. In addition to the above there was a Dutch air service between Holland and Java and a French service between Paris and Indo-China. At the time when war broke out in Europe the Germans, too, had just arranged with the Siamese Govern-

ment for the operation of a Far Eastern air service by way of Bangkok.

Although Siam is a small country, her financial position was, until the outbreak of the war in which she is now involved, a very sound one. The Government note issue was amply covered, there was a substantial Treasury Reserve, and she had never once defaulted in her payments of interest with respect to her external debt, which amounted to no more than approximately £4,000,000, and the whole of which was held in London. The annual national revenue derived from taxation and other sources amounted to about £10,000,000.

THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF SIAM

As was shown only too clearly in 1940 and 1941, the geographical situation of Siam gives to her a strategic importance of the first order from the point of view of the British Empire. Her land frontiers in the west are contiguous with those of Malaya and Burma, whilst in the north they adjoin the British Shan States. There is a good road leading through flat country to Alorstar, the capital of the British-protected Malay State of Kedah, from Singora, which is a seaport and the principal town in the Siamese Southern Provinces.* A little further north one has only to cross the estuary of the Pak Chan River from Renong (in Siam) in order to reach Burmese territory at Victoria Point, and further north still there are passes at various points which cross the mountain range separating Burma from Siam. From Nakhon Lampang, on the Siamese Northern Railway, there is a well-made road leading to the frontier of the British Shan State of Keng Tung, and there is continuous connection by railway via Bangkok between Chiangmai, in the extreme north, and Penang and Singapore in the extreme south. It is reported that the Japanese, since their invasion of Siam, have for strategic purposes of their own put into execution a long-discussed plan for linking Siam up with Burma by railroad. They are said to have constructed a line from near Ban Pong, a point on the Siamese Southern Railway, via Kanchanaburi (in Siam) towards Tavoy, with a view to establishing connection with Moulmein. The Siamese Eastern Railway is reported at the same time to

* It was at Singora that the Japanese established their main base when they launched their attack upon Malaya.

have been extended into Cambodia, so that the Japanese are now able to transport troops and material of war by rail from their bases in French Indo-China and Siam to Malaya and Burma, in addition to the means of conveyance by sea which are at their command. There is, too, the question of vulnerability from the air to be considered. The flight from Bangkok to Rangoon now takes no more than an hour or two, whilst the flight from Bangkok to Penang takes only a little longer. Moreover, although there are no Siamese ports capable of any degree of development on the coasts of the Malay Peninsula, the possibilities for the establishment of submarine bases in that region are not to be ignored. In the circumstances described it is evident that, so long as Britain remains responsible for the defence of Burma and Malaya, she cannot disinterest herself from the fate of Siam. It will make all the difference to her whether the Government in power in that country is a friendly or a hostile one. Nor can India be indifferent to the course of events at Bangkok, for Burma is her eastern neighbour and Singapore is one of the keys to the Indian Ocean. If a threat arises from the direction of Siam to the safety of Burma or Malaya, it will be a threat to the safety of India as well.

It is scarcely necessary to say that the contiguity of Siam with French Indo-China is also of the greatest importance to the latter country, whilst, in so far as she forms a part of South-Eastern Asia, conditions in Siam, if regarded from the strategical standpoint, cannot be a matter of indifference to China.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGINS OF THE SIAMESE PEOPLE

THE Siamese belong to, and form the largest group among, what is known as the "Thai" family of peoples. The word "Thai", which the Siamese apply to themselves, is said to mean "Free". Other groups besides the Siamese are the Shans and the Laos, and there are also a number of Thai tribes scattered over Southern China, and among the hills of French Indo-China and of Siam itself. Most of these tribes, the members of which are not very numerous, are composed of animists who still follow a primitive mode of life. The Ahoms, of Assam, were likewise of Thai stock. The Shans inhabit the Shan States, most of which now form part of the British Empire and in the past have been orientated mainly towards Burma, though some of them are to be found within the borders of China. The Laos are the people of the Protectorate known as "Le Laos", which is situated in French Indo-China on the left or eastern bank of the upper part of the River Mekong, and also of the Eastern Provinces of Siam. The inhabitants of the Siamese Northern Provinces also are sometimes called Laos. The Siamese, in the narrowest sense of the word, may be said to make up the people of Central Siam. Siamese, Shans and Laos (and with them the Burmese and Cambodians) derived from India long ago, directly or indirectly, their religion, their culture, their system of customary law and the scripts in which their various languages are written; they all of them, like the peoples of Burma, Cambodia and Ceylon, profess the southern form of the Buddhist faith, known as the "Hinayana" (i.e. "Lesser Vehicle"). All the Thai peoples share common ethnical characteristics; all speak one dialect or another of what must have been originally a common mother-tongue. Although no reliable figures exist, it has been estimated that the total number of persons of Thai race now in existence amounts to between twenty and thirty millions, of whom one half, or more, reside in the Kingdom of Siam.

The cradle of the Thai family of peoples is believed to have been the province of Hunan, in Central China. The Thais

speak, like the Chinese, a monosyllabic language, with a number of tones serving to differentiate between syllables having otherwise the same sound. Like the Chinese, they are racially of Mongoloid type. They form, none the less, a distinct group of their own, both linguistically and in other respects.

Migrations of Thais southwards and westwards from their original home in China must have begun in early times, well before the establishment, in the seventh or eighth century of the Christian era, of the Thai Kingdom of Nanchao, in South-West Yunnan, suppressed in 1287 by the armies of Kublai Khan, the Mongol Emperor of China. These migrations must have been caused primarily by pressure from the Chinese masters of the surrounding country, but another factor explaining them is, doubtless, the attraction of the milder climate and more fertile regions to the south. Whatever the cause may have been, it is established that at an early date and for centuries thereafter a flow of Thai immigrants came down the valleys of the Irrawaddy, Salwin and Mekong Rivers into what are now Burma or the Shan States, Siam and French Indo-China.

When the Thais first penetrated into the present-day country of Siam, they found a good part of it occupied by the Môn, an Austro-Asiatic people already civilised from India, who had established local centres as far north as Lampun (where there existed a Môn State under the name of Haripunjaya), in the south-east as far as Lvo (the modern Lopburi), and as far west as Thatôn (in Lower Burma). The part of Central Siam occupied by the Môn was known as Dvaravati, and seems to have consisted of a number of small principalities without a central State of any importance. In course of time the Môn were dispossessed gradually of their hold over Central and Southern Siam by the Khmers, or Cambodians, another Austro-Asiatic people established to the east. These succeeded in creating at the beginning of the ninth century a powerful Empire, the capital of which came to be fixed at Angkor. From the first half of the eleventh century the Khmer Empire began to expand, at the expense of the Môn, in what is now called Siam. Dvaravati (or Central Siam) fell into its hands, together with the northern part of the Malay Peninsula, as also did Lvo and the Siamese eastern tableland. Thai immigrants must be presumed to have been infiltrating into Siam from the north during both the period of Môn ascendancy and the subsequent period in which the Môn

were replaced as rulers by the Khmers. For long the majority of these Thai settlers must have remained under Môn or Khmer domination, but in the end they became numerous enough and strong enough to wrest the supremacy from the mighty Khmer Empire itself. (It is to the Khmers, who, no less than the Môn, had been civilised from India, that we owe the stupendous architectural monuments and the wonderful bas-reliefs of Angkor.) The Thais had originally been ancestor-worshippers and, if the present-day Siamese are Buddhists and are imbued ultimately with Indian traditions of culture, they must owe that fact mainly to their early contacts with the Môn and Khmers who preceded them.

It is hardly necessary to say that the Siamese of the present time are not of unmixed Thai stock. In the course of their history there must have been intermingling with Chinese and Burmese in the north as well as with Môn and Khmers in the south and east. But the Siamese of to-day are proud of their Thai ancestry, which forms, after all, the principal element in their racial make-up. In quite recent times there has been a noticeable mixture through intermarriage between Chinese immigrants and Siamese women.

In the extreme south of Siam the population includes a small Malay element, which speaks the Malay language and follows the Moslem religion. There are also some three millions of persons of Chinese race residing in Siam to-day, of whom the great majority, however, were born locally.

The racial origins of the Siamese are of more than purely ethnological interest. They have a direct bearing upon the political situation in South-Eastern Asia at the present moment, for, as will be seen later in this book, it was on account of the Thai ancestry of the Siamese people that the Government at Bangkok came to entertain the ambition of uniting all the peoples of Thai stock, wherever they may be settled, into a single State with Siam as its nucleus.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL

THE DESTRUCTION OF AYUTHIA AND THE FOUNDATION OF BANGKOK

THE revolt of the Thai groups in Siam against the Khmers began in the thirteenth century, Sukhothai, in the northern part of Central Siam, being the first Khmer citadel to fall into their hands. In the course of the fourteenth century the Khmers lost to the Thais the whole of the Empire which they had acquired. The foundation of Ayuthia in the middle of that century as the capital of a new Thai Kingdom in Siam was followed less than a hundred years later by the destruction at the hands of the Siamese of the Khmer capital at Angkor, and thereafter Cambodia declined to the position of a vassal State of Siam, though the suzerainty over her was claimed subsequently by the Emperors of Annam.

The Thai Kingdom of Sukhothai is said to have been founded in 1238, and its third monarch, King Ram Khambeng, is one of the greatest figures in Siamese history. He came to the throne in 1275 and extended his sway over the greater part of the present Siam, as well as over Luang Prabang (on the east bank of the Mekong River, now situated in French Indo-China), and also over portions of Lower Burma. After his death about the year 1317 the Kingdom of Sukhothai declined rapidly. Pegu (in Lower Burma) was lost to it, and at the same time a rival Thai power grew up in the shape of the Principality of U Thong, near the modern town of Suphan in South Central Siam. In 1350 an energetic ruler of the latter State founded a city at Ayuthia, on the River Menam about 45 miles to the north of Bangkok, and proclaimed himself king there, becoming known subsequently as King Rama Thibodi I. This marked the beginning of the modern Kingdom of Siam, of which Ayuthia remained the capital until its destruction by the Burmese in 1767. The kings of Ayuthia extended their rule over the whole of the country, the Kingdom of Sukhothai being made their vassal

after enjoying an existence of 132 years as an independent State. In course of time there ceased to be even vassal kings at Sukhothai, which was finally absorbed into the realm of Ayuthia. It was the armies of Ayuthia which destroyed Angkor in 1431.

In the course of the next three hundred years the Kingdom of Ayuthia slowly consolidated itself until it became one of the most powerful of all the States in South-Eastern Asia. It was during this period that the administrative, legal and social systems of the Siamese took shape in a form which survives in some respects to this day, and it was during this time also that Siam made her first contacts with Western countries. The period was disturbed upon occasion by palace revolutions and changes of dynasty, and there were constant wars with neighbouring countries, but upon the whole it was an era of consolidation and development which left its mark upon the Siamese nation for good and all.

The wars just mentioned were waged sometimes against Cambodia, which continued to give trouble for long after she had been reduced to a condition of vassalage to Ayuthia, sometimes with the Thai Kingdom of Chiengmai in what is now Northern Siam, but above all with the neighbouring Kingdom of Burma, the traditional and the greatest enemy of Siam.

As early as the time of King Rama Thibodi I the rule of Ayuthia was extended to include Southern Siam, Tenasserim and Tavoy (in Lower Burma) and even Malacca. During the greater portion of the Ayuthia period Tenasserim and adjoining parts of Lower Burma, and also Chiengmai, formed a battleground for supremacy between Burma and Siam. With respect to Chiengmai and to other portions of what are at present the Siamese Northern Provinces, it is to be remarked that by the beginning of the nineteenth century those areas had passed definitely into the orbit of Siam. On the other hand, no portion of Lower Burma has been subject to Siamese domination since the end of the eighteenth century.

In 1568 the Burmese took the city of Ayuthia by storm, and for fifteen years after that event Siam was reduced to a state of vassalage to Burma. She regained her independence thanks to the efforts of the most heroic of her monarchs, King Naresuen, who raised the standard of revolt, recaptured Ayuthia and carried the war into Burma, subjugating Pegu in the south and some of the Shan States in the north.

The Portuguese established contact with Ayuthia at the beginning of the sixteenth century and were the first Europeans to do so. They were followed in the next century by the Dutch and the English, who, like them, had come for purposes of trade. Factories were established by these merchants at Ayuthia and also at Patani, in the Malay Peninsula. The latter half of the seventeenth century saw the arrival of the French, who acquired a considerable degree of influence in the reign of King Narai (1657 to 1688). They were helped to do so by Constantine Phaulkon, a Greek adventurer who had risen to a position of great power under that monarch. Embassies were exchanged between King Narai and King Louis XIV of France, who entertained the hope, doomed to disappointment, that the Siamese sovereign would be converted to Christianity by the French Roman Catholic missionaries who were already establishing themselves in the country. A second embassy from France was accompanied by *some hundreds of soldiers*, a circumstance which caused alarm among the Siamese notables surrounding the King, who suspected the French of entertaining sinister military designs. On the death of King Narai at this juncture one of his generals took the opportunity to seize the Throne; by his orders Constantine Phaulkon was executed and the French troops were compelled to leave Siamese territory. As a result of this apparent attempt by an Occidental Power to interfere in the domestic affairs of Siam, that country cut herself off from further intercourse with the West for an ensuing period of nearly a century and a half.

Pegu was lost to Siam in the seventeenth century, but she retained Tenasserim. The eighteenth century was a period of political unrest for the Kingdom of Ayuthia, but the first half of it was not disturbed by any serious external wars and the people were unusually prosperous. In 1759, however, war broke out again with Burma, whose King laid unsuccessful siege to the capital in the following year. In 1762 the same King conquered Luang Prabang and Chiangmai, and in 1763 he took Tavoy. In 1767 he attacked Ayuthia again, took the city after a siege of fourteen months and destroyed it utterly. Siam was now annexed to Burma. The King of Ayuthia escaped to the jungle, where he perished miserably, and so ended another chapter in Siamese history.

But, as in the sixteenth century, Siam was not long in re-

covering her independence—on this occasion under the auspices of a general of mixed Siamese and Chinese blood named Phya Tak Sin, who gathered round him a band of followers after the withdrawal of the main Burmese forces, drove the invaders out of the country and made himself King with his capital at Dhonburi, which is now a suburb of Bangkok lying on the west bank of the River Menam. This new capital was set up in 1768, only a year after the fall of Ayuthia. Phya Tak Sin afterwards became insane and was put to death, the Crown being then assumed, in 1782, by one of his generals, who was styled Chao Phya Chakri but who afterwards became known as King Phra Buddha Yot Fa Chulaloke. He was the first monarch of the Chakri Dynasty, the members of which have continued to occupy the Throne of Siam until the present time. This King transferred the seat of Government to the east bank of the River Menam, to the site of what is now the city of Bangkok proper.

When Phya Tak Sin died, the dominions of that remarkable leader embraced the whole of the former Kingdom of Ayuthia, with the exception of Tavoy and Tenasserim, and he was suzerain over the petty Lao States now composing the Siamese Northern Provinces, as well as over the Thai State of Luang Prabang. He also subdued the neighbouring Thai State of Vientiane (or Wieng Chan), which, like Luang Prabang, is now a part of the Laos Protectorate of French Indo-China. Both Luang Prabang and Vientiane remained dependencies of Siam up to 1893.

FROM THE FOUNDATION OF BANGKOK TO THE PRESENT TIME

During the first two reigns of the Chakri Dynasty there were frequent wars between Siam and Burma, more than one invasion by the Burmese being repelled in the north, and also in the region of the Malay Peninsula. The first King of the Dynasty, after expelling the Burmese from the Peninsula, availed himself of the opportunity to reassert Siam's claims to suzerainty over the Malay States of Kedah and Patani, and even to advance a new claim to suzerainty over the neighbouring Malay States of Kelantan and Trengganu, which had not previously been subject to Siam. Kedah, whose Sultan was proving refractory, was twice invaded by the Siamese, once in the second reign and

again in the third reign, to the no small dissatisfaction of the British authorities, who were by that time established on the adjacent island of Penang, leased by the Sultan of Kedah to the East India Company. The Court of Bangkok continued to regard Kedah (together with the adjoining small Malay State of Perlis), as well as Kelantan and Trengganu, as being its vassals, and those States continued to despatch symbolic tribute to it yearly up to the year 1909, when the suzerainty over them was transferred by Siam to Great Britain. Some time before that date Patani had been incorporated into the Kingdom of Siam, of which it now forms one of the Southern Provinces.

The almost chronic state of war between Burma and Siam may be said to have come to an end with the acquisition by Great Britain of the Burmese provinces of Arakan, Martaban, Tavoy and Tenasserim in 1826.

During the reign of the first of the Chakri monarchs Siamese suzerainty over Cambodia seems to have been acknowledged. In the second reign Siamese troops were sent to that country, the King of which was showing signs of disaffection. Fifty years later, in 1863, Cambodia became a French Protectorate, except for the provinces of Battambang and Siemrap, which stayed in the possession of the Siamese until 1907.

In the foregoing historical narrative reference has been made frequently to Siam's past claims to supremacy over portions of Lower Burma, certain Malay States in the Peninsula and parts of French Indo-China (Cambodia and the two Thai States of Luang Prabang and Vientiane). After lying dormant for a time these claims were to be revived, more or less overtly, by Siamese chauvinists under the new *régime* set up in consequence of the *coup d'état* staged at Bangkok in 1932.

The reign of the fourth sovereign of the Chakri Dynasty, King Mongkut (1851 to 1868), marks a turning-point in the history of Siam, for it saw the conclusion, in 1855, of a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with Great Britain which for the first time threw the country really open to foreign trade and enterprise. Under the provisions of that agreement a British Consul was appointed to reside at Bangkok, and soon afterwards similar Treaties were concluded with most of the other European Powers, and also with the United States. It was

not until 1898 that a Treaty on the same lines was signed with Japan.*

King Mongkut was a highly intelligent monarch; attracted by Western progress, he was sagacious enough to realise that he must come to terms with it and not seek to oppose it, if his country was to remain independent. For the West by that time was knocking at the door. Japan was in process of being opened to foreign intercourse under compulsion from the United States; the Occidental Powers were consolidating the Treaty system in China; to come nearer home, France was already installing herself in Indo-China; whilst Britain, in consequence of the campaigns of 1825 and 1852, had annexed the whole of Lower Burma. The chances for the survival of Siam's independence at that moment would have been small indeed if King Mongkut had not been quick to see that Western countries should be given no excuse for intervening in her domestic affairs or for seizing any portion of her territory, in pursuit of their national interests. This end he achieved by negotiating willingly the various Treaties of 1855 and succeeding years. His policy was continued by his son King Chulalongkorn (1868 to 1910), who initiated the practice, to prove so efficacious, of engaging Western advisers to assist in reorganising the Government and the administration of justice. Siam had, in fact, been saved from further aggression at the hands of her ancient enemy, Burma, through the accident of the British annexations just mentioned, only to be confronted by a still more formidable peril in the shape of the growth of Western influence upon the continent of Asia. This peril she proved able to overcome through the wisdom of King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn, who are to be reckoned among the greatest of Siamese sovereigns. It was very different with Burma, the last monarch of which, King Thibaw, refused to welcome the onward march of Western civilisation or to utilise it for the benefit of his country, but did his utmost to thwart and to oppose it. The result was that Burma lost her independence altogether, whereas Siam never ceased to be a sovereign State.

King Chulalongkorn, always to be remembered as the ruler who abolished slavery in Siam, was succeeded by his son King

* As time went on, the various foreign Consulates were raised to the status of Legations, and in 1941 the Japanese went a step further by converting their Legation into an Embassy.

Vajiravudh, who afterwards took the name of Rama VI, and who reigned from 1910 to 1925. Educated in England, he was a firm friend of Britain, and it was under him that Siam entered the world war of 1914-18 on the side of the Allied Nations. The next monarch after him was his youngest brother King Prajadhipok, who abdicated in 1935 and who died in England in 1941. He was followed by his nephew, the present monarch, King Ananda Mahidol, still a minor at school in Switzerland. He was in that country when the Government at Bangkok, in January, 1942, declared war in his name upon Great Britain and the United States.

CHAPTER IV

THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF SIAM. SOCIAL CONDITIONS

UP to the establishment of Constitutional Government in 1932 Siam was ruled, as every Oriental State used to be, by absolute monarchs to whom all the land in the country was presumed to belong and whose word was undisputed law. The King was, in fact, sacrosanct, and to this very day his subjects, when addressing him, are obliged to employ, in place of the ordinary pronoun of the first person, the expression "I, the slave of the Lord Buddha", the original idea having been, no doubt, that the sovereign was a Bodhisatva or one who was destined to be a future Buddha. In olden times when the King went abroad, usually on the back of an elephant, the populace would fall upon their faces as he passed. Needless to say, this quasi-adoration of the monarch is now a thing of the past, although it still prevailed when King Mongkut concluded the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with Sir John Bowring in 1855. Occidentals were not asked to indulge in it, but it was then the custom in purely Siamese circles for those in the presence of the King or of Princes to recline in an attitude of semi-prostration upon the floor. This practice is still followed in old-fashioned quarters to-day. It ceased to be obligatory, however, in the reign of King Chulalongkorn, for that monarch's first act, after he had attained his majority and had been crowned, was to dispense his subjects from the necessity for prostrating themselves in his presence.

King Rama VI promulgated a law regulating the succession to the Throne which is still in force, though its provisions require endorsement in specific cases by the recently formed Siamese Legislature. Before then there was no strict following of the hereditary principle, and each new monarch was in theory chosen by the Princes and notables of the day.* In practice the new monarch was usually a son, though he might be a brother,

* I remember that on the accession of King Rama VI the foreign Legations at Bangkok were informed by the Siamese Foreign Office that His Majesty had been selected in this manner.

of his predecessor. In the period of Ayuthia the custom seems to have grown up of sometimes recognising the probable heir to the Throne even before the death of the reigning sovereign, the Prince so designated being known as the "Uparat" (Uparaja), or Viceroy. In the early Bangkok days the "Uparat" developed into a somewhat inconvenient personage in the shape of a Second King, and Siam was governed for a time by two monarchs simultaneously. The office of Second King was abolished during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, in the early eighties of the last century.

Until modern times the administration of the country was entrusted by the King chiefly to two high officers of State who were, respectively, the "Phra Kalahom", who was at the head of the military establishment, and the "Phra Klang" (or "Barcalon", as he was termed by English writers of the seventeenth century), who was in charge of finance and also of foreign relations. Between them these two functionaries appear to have been responsible for the conduct of almost every department of the Government. Foreign trade used to be a monopoly of the King, but that monopoly disappeared for good and all after the signature of the Treaty of 1855 with ourselves and of subsequent Treaties with other Powers.

Officials were graded in the olden days according to the number of acres of land which the sovereign had assigned to them. They also bore titles which were followed in each case by some words of Sanskrit or Pali origin designating the office which the recipient was supposed to hold or the qualities which he was expected to display in the discharge of his functions. These titles and the designations which followed after them were adopted in place of the personal name of the individual concerned, who in the course of his life might come to be known under a number of names successively, as he was moved from one official position to another. As time went on and as the scope of administrative functions increased and became more diversified, these official designations by no means corresponded in all cases to the actual duties performed, whilst the land qualification has long since ceased to be applied. The titles were, in order of distinction, "Chao Phya", "Phya", "Phra", "Luang", "Khun" and "Mün". If you had no title, you were plain "Nai" So-and-So, "Nai" being the equivalent of our "Mr.". The titles were not hereditary, which was fortunate

in view of the great number of them conferred, for otherwise the entire male population would have come to be ennobled in a few generations. They have been abolished by the Siamese Government within the past year or two and with them another historic landmark has disappeared.

The use of surnames in Siam was introduced by King Rama VI, who promulgated a law enabling all persons who wished to do so to choose a surname for themselves and to register it with the appropriate authority. The adoption of surnames (i.e. of family names) has now become general.

The organisation of the Government of Siam upon modern principles with a division of functions between a number of properly constituted Ministries was effected by King Chulalongkorn, who was also responsible for reorganising the administration of justice.

The old Siamese customary law had been worked up into quite an elaborate system, but it was in the nature of things unsuited to the conditions prevailing in a modern State, whether Oriental or otherwise. It had its good points; for example, a servant who stole from his master could not be punished according to the ordinary process of law, since the culprit was regarded as belonging to the family of his employer, with whom the duty lay of inflicting suitable punishment himself—a sensible view to take in the ancient feudal, not to say patriarchal, form of society which used to obtain in Siam. The old law has now been replaced by a series of Legal Codes on up-to-date lines which have only lately been completed; before their promulgation their place had been taken by a succession of Laws and Royal Decrees embodying the principles of modern jurisprudence in a variety of cases. A judicial system was likewise organised under King Chulalongkorn which was based largely on the English model.

The great mass of the Siamese consist of peasant cultivators. Although the standard of living among them may not be very high by Western standards, their wants are comparatively few and, in a country so naturally productive as Siam, acute economic distress is practically unknown. Primary education is in theory compulsory throughout the Kingdom, but as a matter of fact less than one half of the children of school age actually attend school and the standard of literacy does not amount as yet to more than about 30 per cent. of the population. The small upper

class is composed of members of the Royal Family and of a by no means large aristocracy consisting of a few old families and of high Government officials. Between this class and the bulk of the relatively uneducated people comes a small middle class made up of Civil Servants, officers of the Army and Navy and a few professional men. It is from this class that, apart from the Royal Family and aristocracy, the intelligentsia of the country is drawn. There is virtually no Siamese mercantile class, the people of the country having shown very little aptitude for commerce hitherto. The consequence is that the trade of the country, both internal and external, is chiefly in the hands of foreigners (Chinese, European and Indian), a state of affairs which the Government is now endeavouring to remedy by encouraging in every possible way the creation of a Siamese business community.

No one will say of the people of Siam that they are fond of hard work. As manual labourers, no less than as traders, they are markedly inferior to the industrious Chinese and, dwelling as they do in a fertile land where most of them can gain a livelihood without too great exertion, it is pertinent to ask why, if work is not congenial to them, they should devote themselves to it more than they need. The occupation to which they take most naturally is their traditional one of tillers of the soil, which allows of considerable leisure during the seasons when the planting or harvesting of crops is not in progress. The labour force in Siam is recruited mainly from among the Chinese, though Siamese manual workers are now to be seen to a greater extent than formerly in the larger centres of population.

The industries native to Siam, as might be expected from an agricultural country, are of a minor order and have until lately been practically confined to cottage industries, such as the weaving of cloth. These are now becoming extinct, manufactured articles (and especially textiles) from abroad replacing the home-made article. The native handicrafts, too, are well-nigh extinct, with the exception of the attractive, distinctively Siamese, niello and *repoussé* work in silver, now revived not unsuccessfully.

Formerly, when roads and railways were alike lacking, the population of Siam was strung out along the line of the rivers and canals, and that is still to a great extent the case to-day. Outside Bangkok there are no big towns, the largest of them,

Chiengmai, the northern capital, counting its inhabitants by tens, and not by hundreds, of thousands. In the urban centres the most popular form of amusement is now provided by the cinema, which is gradually killing the old-style dance-drama once staged by troops of actors, many of them itinerant. In the villages the centre of social life is still the local Buddhist temple, often the only edifice of brick or stone in the place, the houses of the villagers usually being made of wood with roofs of thatch, or sometimes of corrugated iron. It is to the temple that the children repair to school, and it is here that the various religious festivals are celebrated with a simple devotion and an innocent gaiety refreshing to witness. Many temples set apart two or three days each year as a special period for the "making of merit" within their precincts, and these occasions develop into popular fairs with all manner of amusements provided in the temple grounds, for Buddhists take the sensible line that, so far from being divorced from harmless pleasure, religion is better associated with it. In towns situated by the banks of a river boat races are held at regular periods, whilst among the pupils in the secondary schools all over the country the playing of Association football has gained a firm hold. The Buddhist weekly sabbath, which is calculated according to the moon and thus does not correspond to the Western Sunday, is no longer kept as a holiday in the schools and Government offices, its place as a day of rest being taken by Sunday as a result of Western precedent and influence.

Although the press of Siam is represented by newspapers issued only at Bangkok, these journals are despatched daily to the provinces, where they serve to keep the public *au fait* with events in the capital and in the outside world. A factor tending still more powerfully to minimise the isolation of provincial life is to be found in the radio. The Government at Bangkok maintains a wireless station which is constantly sending out news bulletins, official *communiqués*, patriotic announcements and exhortations, etc., for the benefit of the population in the interior, where a wireless receiving set is almost sure to be in the possession of at least one person in even the most distant townships. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of this factor, if only because the Government makes use of it for the purpose of shaping public sentiment in conformity with its own wishes. A third factor tending to bring the provincial rustic into contact

with a bigger world is to be seen in the extension of the road system, which in its turn has called into being the motor-bus service, whereby the humblest villager is enabled at the cost of a few cents to see something of life in the town nearest to his own particular hamlet.

As an instance of how the Government is endeavouring to shape the national life according to its will, I may quote certain recent sumptuary regulations. These discourage the use of the "pan-ung", a distinctive Siamese garment formerly worn by men and women alike, consisting of a piece of cloth or silk draped round the lower part of the body, the "slack" being made into a roll, passed between the legs and tucked into the waist behind. This garment, which bore a suggestive resemblance to the Indian "dhoti", is in consequence out of fashion; instead, women wear skirts or sarongs and men wear trousers. According to other regulations, women are supposed to wear hats out of doors, whilst men are forbidden to enter any public building unless they are in possession of one. Such ordinances are unpopular with the public and it is difficult to perceive any reason for them.

It used to be the custom for Siamese women to cut their hair short like men, but this practice went out of vogue many years ago.

ART, RELIGION AND NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

As has been said, the culture and art of Siam derive ultimately from those colonists from India who established themselves in South-Eastern Asia long centuries ago and with whose civilisation the Siamese came into contact through the intermediary of the Môns and Khmers. Thus it is that their classical dramas and dances centre to this day very largely round the Gods and heroes of the Ramayana and Mahabharata, that their old-style architecture and painting display equally an Indian origin and that the very alphabet which they employ goes back to an Indian prototype. Of purely local derivation are some attractive folk dances, whilst in the local tradition are also those singers and narrators who can improvise verses to suit each occasion with remarkable skill and celerity. In the same tradition are likewise a number of folk tales and legends which are related in verse. Until comparatively recent times prose does not seem to have been employed at all extensively by the Siamese as a purely literary vehicle ; its use, apart from the exigencies of ordinary life, being more or less confined to works of a religious, historical or legal nature. To the best of my belief the existing songs or lyrics in the Siamese language are of modern date, in the sense that they were composed subsequently to the fall of Ayuthia. Unhappily, the sack of that city by the Burmese was so complete that very few written documents of the pre-Bangkok period have survived, so that it is impossible to form an exact idea to-day of the indigenous literature of that era. Anonymity attaches to almost all literary compositions in Siamese until we come to works of comparatively recent date ; and the country lacks in consequence a literary tradition embodying the names of outstanding authors or poets.

As was inevitable, the art-forms of the older Siam are now tending rapidly to disappear in face of the modernisation of the country and of the resultant changes in the life and manners of the people, beginning towards the end of the last century and proceeding apace since the revolution of 1932. Hence the folk dances and other manifestations of popular local talent are

becoming more and more confined to the provinces, whilst the classical theatre, too, is falling into decay and the traditional style of architecture is seldom employed nowadays except in the construction of Buddhist temples. So also with such older literary forms as the folk tale or popular epic, which are now relics of the past. Inasmuch as the art and culture of any people cannot remain static and must develop with the changing times, this abandonment of the old traditions is natural and need not be a cause for regret in itself. Unfortunately, in the present-day Siam there are no signs as yet of anything new being evolved which is at all worthy to replace the old. The classical plays, for example, are being supplanted by imitations of Western *revues* or by tendentiously patriotic dramas and, above all, by the ubiquitous cinema ; there is no such thing as a nascent theatre endeavouring to portray life as it is lived in Siam to-day and the comedy of modern manners has still to be created.

With respect to architecture, the latest buildings erected at Bangkok after Western models are scarcely such as to excite admiration and, with few exceptions, the literary output, apart from the stage and a number of patriotic songs, would seem to be limited to translations of foreign stories or to tales of adventure in the vernacular more fitted for the reading of schoolboys than of adults. This dearth of talent is probably due to the outlook of the present generation in Siam which, being predominantly one of materialism, has allowed the cult of the useful (too often synonymous with what is Western) to supersede that of things whose sole value is artistic or beautiful. With the new Siam in the making and with so much to be done in the way of practical improvement upon the outmoded methods of past years, it is only to be expected that more weight should be attached at the present moment to the outward and more tangible sides of life than to its less utilitarian aspects. But, even so, it is difficult to resist the feeling that the Siam of to-day is more materialistic in its outlook than it need be or ought to be, and it is unfortunate that the development in the life of the nation which followed upon the *coup d'état* should not have been accompanied by a corresponding development in the field of art and literature.

Fortunately, there is less deterioration in the sphere of religion. Whilst freedom of belief is assured to all, Buddhism is the State religion, and the mass of the people are still genuinely devoted to the faith of their fathers. But the intelligentsia is disposed

to lend less credence than formerly to religious dogma, and the Government betrays a tendency to prostitute religious sentiment to serve secular, that is to say, purely nationalist, ends. Nevertheless, pious Buddhists are still to be found among the educated class. All over the Kingdom, in the capital no less than in the most remote villages of the interior, the yellow-robed Buddhist monks sally forth from their temple precincts every day in the early morning to collect the food which is necessary for their subsistence. Each one carries with him a bowl into which it is the privilege of the faithful before whose dwelling he waits to deposit something of their own day's rations for the sustenance of the members of the Holy Order. The latter may not touch money, they may not look upon a woman, even though it be the housewife who is ministering to their needs, they speak no word of thanks, they receive in silence and with downcast eyes and then pass on. No solid food may pass their lips after the meal partaken at eleven o'clock in the morning, but after that repast they may smoke or drink tea at any time at their pleasure.

It used to be the custom for every man in Siam to enter a monastery for at least the period of one Buddhist Lent (about three months), but this practice is no longer followed generally. The vows taken by a Buddhist monk are not for life and he is free to leave the Holy Order at any time if he wishes to do so. The Buddhist scriptures are read, and prayers are recited, in a somewhat mutilated form of Pali, which is a dead language of India understood only by the more highly educated among the laity. The services held by the monks are impressive and their chants sound almost Gregorian.

It is to the credit of the Buddhist clergy in Siam that they keep aloof from politics and confine their attention to religious affairs.

The Siamese are not by temperament bellicose, and in saying this I am not disparaging but rather complimenting them. They are not physical cowards; they are patriotic. But it appears to me that they do not take naturally to war. They are good-natured folk, courteous to one another and to strangers, and their history is unsullied by any record of systematic religious persecution. The fact that they have been dragged into war against us by their present military leaders at the behest of Japan does not cause me to alter my opinion.

The educated Siamese, though inclined to be indolent, can

be very intelligent ; they include, indeed, some of the most intelligent people whom I have met and in that respect they need not, as a class, fear comparison with the intelligentsia in any other Oriental country.

No account of the characteristics of the Siamese people would be complete without a reference to their natural politeness. The courteous, but at the same time independent, bearing of the average Siamese as displayed in the ordinary contacts of human life is something which must be actually encountered if it is to be appreciated. This applies to the lowest no less than to the highest strata of society. The servant or the labourer will show the greatest respect for his superiors and will conduct himself towards them with a degree of profound consideration and deference which is, nevertheless, not to be mistaken for self-abasement. True, old-time custom (which is now passing away) may lead an inferior to adopt certain obsequious outward forms of signifying his regard for his social betters (such as the assumption of a kneeling position or the raising of his folded hands as though in an attitude of prayer when in their presence) ; but on the other hand, it is not to be forgotten that his natural pride makes a Siamese quick to resent bad manners and that, if his instinct is to defer readily to authority, that instinct is based upon a feudal tradition in matters concerning the State, and upon a paternal tradition in matters affecting the family, which is of a kind to command our respect rather than to justify us in charging him with servility. The former practice of prostrating one's self before the King or before Princes of high rank is to be considered in the light of what I am here saying.

When it comes to the more educated classes, and more particularly to the members of the Royal Family and of the aristocracy, we meet with a fine flower of courteous demeanour for a parallel to which in the West we must go back to the exquisite period of the eighteenth century. I think it no exaggeration to maintain that in this essentially humane sphere of good manners the ordinary Siamese—and, indeed, the ordinary inhabitant of the countries of South-Eastern Asia—is the superior of the average Occidental to-day.

I have heard it said that Siamese politeness is, oftener than not, more a matter of outward observance than of that genuine courtesy which springs from the heart. With this view I am not disposed to agree, though it may perhaps be admitted that the

behaviour of the lower orders is characterised by a greater degree of sincerity than is that of their social superiors. But that is true of society in any part of the world, and it is the tendency for polite manners everywhere to grow more artificial as they become more refined. The good manners of the mass of the people in Siam are, I feel sure, instinctive rather than assumed. And there is one respect in which the Siamese, like most Orientals, display a sincere and instinctive courtesy which I find altogether commendable. I am referring to the respect which they pay both to old age and to those who have been their instructors in youth.

In short, I find the Siamese a very attractive people, and I have made many friends among them whom I hold in much affection and regard.

SECTION II

OLD SIAM

CHAPTER VI

CONDITIONS IN THE OLD SIAM

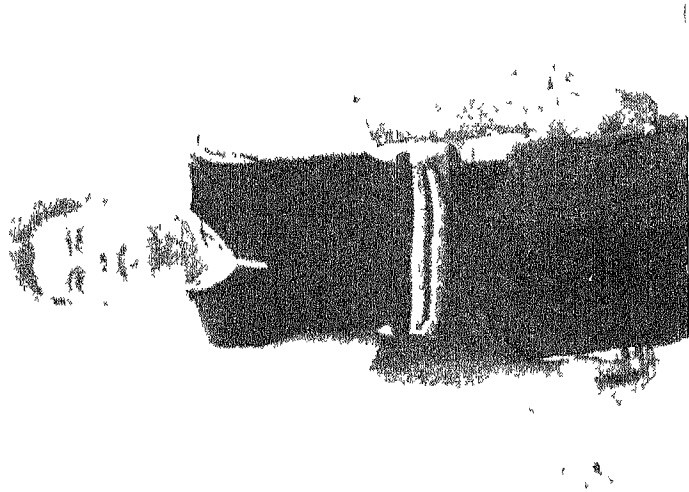
WHEN I arrived at Bangkok as a Student Interpreter in 1904, the "Old Siam" had not yet passed out of existence ; not, of course, the Siam of the early Bangkok days, practically untouched by Western influences, but of the period which began, under King Mongkut, with the throwing open of the country to Occidental intercourse and which saw the establishment in it of a not inconsiderable community of Western merchants and officials. Conditions were, however, so different even then from what they are to-day that I feel justified in referring to the Siam of that period as being "old". It lasted until 1932, when the system of absolute monarchy was suppressed as the result of the *coup d'état* and a constitutional form of Government emerged. The old Siam then definitely passed away, for it synchronised with the era of absolute rule, which then came to an end.

King Chulalongkorn was on the Throne in 1904 and he was, literally, monarch of all he surveyed. Fortunately for the country, he exercised his unlimited power with wisdom and clemency and was greatly loved by his people. His son, King Rama VI, was similarly unfettered in the exercise of his authority. His successor, King Prajadhipok, although much under the influence of his uncles and brothers, was none the less an absolute ruler, too, up to the time when he was compelled to promulgate a Constitution. Until then there had been no check upon the exercise of the Royal will except in the sphere of religion. The King might not interfere with the Buddhist monks, and any one who had incurred the monarch's displeasure would be safe if he took refuge in a monastery. Thus time and again in Siamese history we read of royal Princes who were in danger of being eliminated by the King and who, to protect themselves, fled to the sanctuary of a temple. King Mongkut himself furnished a case in point, for, when the second monarch of the Chakri

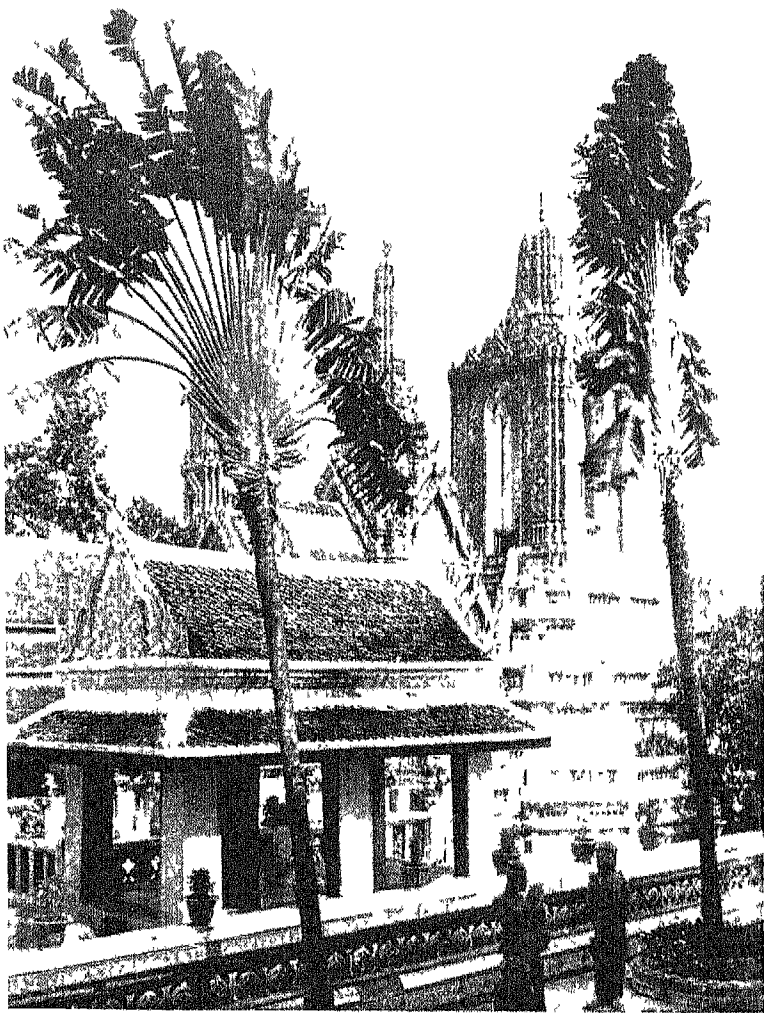


A House Servant

SIAMESE TYPES



A Fisherman



A CORNER OF THE ROYAL PALACE AT BANGKOK

Dynasty died, it was he who should have succeeded to the Throne if traditional custom had been followed. One of his brothers, however, seized the Crown for himself and the future King Mongkut was obliged to don the yellow robe in order to preserve his life ; he remained a monk until the usurping monarch in turn died and he was called out of his seclusion to mount the Throne.

Other checks upon the Royal authority beyond the religious one there were none, unless it were to be found in the rigid precedents and etiquette by which the members of the Royal Family were bound among themselves, and even these the King could vary if he chose. King Mongkut himself, distinguished and enlightened figure that he was, showed himself capable of occasional acts of despotism. One such act occurred in 1856, when, in the absence from Bangkok of the first British Consul to be appointed to Siam, His Majesty ordered the arrest of a Siamese clerk in the Consulate who had aroused his wrath, and caused him to be beaten so severely that he died. Let it not be thought, however, that such acts as these were characteristic of King Mongkut, still less of his successors, for King Chulalongkorn and his sons were essentially humane and kindly men, to whom the thought of wanton cruelty would have been altogether repugnant. They showed themselves, no doubt, to be arbitrary at times and, of course, the patronage of all official appointments was in their hands. But they were far from being tyrants and, though the reformed judicial system in vogue in their reigns had come as a gift to the people from the sovereign, they did not seek to interfere with the normal course of justice. The only exception to this rule was that until recently members of the Royal Family were not justiciable to the ordinary courts, offences committed by them being dealt with, and punished by, the King himself. As I have said, King Chulalongkorn earned the genuine affection of his subjects and it was, doubtless, because this form of despotism weighed in practice so lightly on the population that it lasted for so long. The circumstances which brought about its final overthrow will be described later. The end was to come with startling suddenness, though some time before 1932 signs were not wanting that a certain leaven was working, and under King Rama VI an unsuccessful conspiracy was hatched among some of the officers in the Army which was directed against the existing *régime*.

Something of the flavour of what I have called the old Siam will perhaps be gathered from a consideration of the character and life of King Chulalongkorn himself.

He succeeded his father whilst still a lad of fifteen and he reigned for forty-two years. Although he had never studied in Europe, he had benefited when a boy by the instruction of an English governess whom King Mongkut had engaged to give lessons to his children. He had thus acquired some knowledge of English, and in course of time he had made himself familiar with Occidental ways of living and thinking, as well as with the trend of international affairs. It was he who introduced the policy, followed ever since, of despatching selected young Siamese to foreign countries for their education, and he paid two visits to Europe himself. His bearing was most impressive and he looked every inch a king. Though so generally beloved, he was capable of inspiring awe, and the members of the Royal House, from the oldest to the youngest, entertained a very healthy respect for him. In fact, he ruled them with a strong hand, and there were occasions when he did not scruple to mete out exemplary punishment to peccant Princes of the highest rank.

King Chulalongkorn was willing to learn from the West, but he was determined that his country should not be dominated by it. In particular, he had learnt a lesson in finance from the example of Egypt. He ascribed the misfortunes of that country at a certain time to the improvidence of the Khedive Ismail, who, in order to pay his debts, was obliged to borrow extensively abroad and thus sold his native land into bondage to the foreigner. Profiting by this example, King Chulalongkorn laid the foundations of the sound financial policy characteristic of Siam almost up to the date of the Japanese invasion. It was based upon a careful balancing of the national budget every year and upon the restriction of foreign borrowings to a minimum. But while his heart was set upon obtaining the fullest measure of independence for Siam, and while his attitude towards most things Western was one of receptivity tempered by wariness, I doubt whether King Chulalongkorn had ever considered the grant of a degree of self-government to his subjects. During his reign even the idea of such a thing was scarcely in the air at all. The country was prosperous, the people were contented and the King lived within his means. It was, in short, a kind of Golden Age. Or was it the Indian Summer of the Siamese

monarchy? To myself it seems so in the retrospect, and I have heard many Siamese express the same view.

In spite of his progressive inclinations, King Chulalongkorn was old-fashioned enough as regards his family affairs. He was the last Siamese monarch to support a large harem, for, like his father, he had many wives, including a few entitled to the designation of "Queen" from being themselves of royal birth. The others ranked only as consorts. His Majesty had over seventy children, but only those males whose mothers were Queens came into consideration for succession to the Throne. The three principal Queens of King Chulalongkorn were full sisters to one another and half-sisters to His Majesty himself. One of them died comparatively early in his reign; another was the late Queen Grandmother, who gave birth to the father of the young King Ananda Mahidol, the reigning monarch at this moment; whilst the third, also dead, was the mother of the late King Rama VI and of the late King Prajadhipok. In King Chulalongkorn's day the ladies of the royal harem were not secluded from the public gaze; they could go about pretty freely, but they resided in a section of the Palace, known in the vernacular as "Inside", to which men were not admitted. King Rama VI took no more than five ladies to wife. Polygamy has since ceased to be recognised by Siamese law, the recently promulgated Code dealing with Personal and Family Status laying it down that a man may have no more than one legal wife. As a consequence the Royal Family, which used to be so large as to constitute a veritable clan, is gradually being reduced in numbers and will in course of time be no more numerous than in countries where the system of monogamy has always obtained. To-day the Siamese Princes who are sons or brothers of a monarch can be counted on the fingers of one hand, whereas forty years ago they could be reckoned by the score.

Up to and including the reign of King Chulalongkorn, it was the custom for the Kings of Siam to seek their principal wives or "Queens" from among their own half-sisters, the reason being that no lady outside the circle of the Royal Family was deemed of sufficiently high rank to be the potential mother of a future sovereign. Alliances with foreign Princesses were unknown in authentic history. When King Rama VI returned from Europe as Crown Prince, it was generally expected that he would marry one of his own half-sisters, daughter of the present

Queen Grandmother and a Princess of the highest rank. He declined to entertain the suggestion that he should ally himself with one who was so nearly related to him by blood, thus breaking resolutely away from age-long tradition.

King Chulalongkorn, like King Rama VI after him, was in the habit of rising very late and of retiring to rest in the early morning. This practice of turning night into day had, in the case of these two sovereigns, one unfortunate consequence. Ministers of State and other high officials were obliged to follow their example, with the result that business could only be transacted with such functionaries in the late afternoon or in the evening, since it was only then that they were to be found at their offices.

I was presented to King Chulalongkorn at more than one formal *levée* and once, upon a less formal occasion, he held a brief conversation with me. Some one had told him that I could speak Siamese and he thereupon addressed me in that language. I was not a little embarrassed, for in Siam, as in Java and Cambodia, there is one language with a special vocabulary of its own for use at Court when addressing Royal Personages, and another for employment in ordinary life. I was unfamiliar with the Court terms and phraseology and told His Majesty so in what I ventured to call my "market Siamese"; he was much amused and bade me talk to him in the same way as to any ordinary person.

I may remark here parenthetically that, as a Student Interpreter, I was obliged to study Siamese during the first two years of my residence in Siam and that I could speak the language of everyday life with some fluency. I found this knowledge of the greatest use to me in my contacts with Siamese officials, only a minority of whom were capable of conversing with ease in any other tongue.

King Rama VI, whose personality will be discussed in another chapter, did not, unfortunately, share his father's horror of running into debt. His extravagance, the full effects of which were seen in the depleted Privy Purse inherited by his successor, was a cause of general scandal. Nevertheless, apart from the abortive military conspiracy mentioned above, there were no discernible evidences of political unrest under this monarch. During his reign good-bye had not yet been said to old Siam. It could not be called a Golden Age, but it was, perhaps, the tail end of King Chulalongkorn's Indian Summer.

This was the period of the foreign advisers and experts, with whose help the administrative, financial and judicial systems of Siam under King Chulalongkorn were so reorganised as to make her, with the single exception of Japan, the best administered of all the independent territories upon the continent of Asia. At the head of the corps of advisers stood the General Adviser (also Adviser in Foreign Affairs), who was always an American. There were a succession of Financial and Judicial Advisers, all of them British. There was likewise for a time a British Adviser in the Ministry of Agriculture, and there were a succession of British Advisers to the Department of Customs, whilst a British subject for long directed the affairs of the Department of Inland Revenue, and there was an Englishman, assisted by other British subjects, at the head of the Bangkok Police. British subjects formed the majority of foreign instructors employed under the Ministry of Education, to which Department a British Adviser was attached for some years. The Officers of Health at Bangkok were for a time British subjects, whilst British experts were also employed in the Survey and Irrigation Departments and there was one British Adviser to the Ministry of Commerce. The Provincial Gendarmerie had a number of Danish officers attached to it and was for a time under the command of a Dane. At one period Danish officers were also serving in the Navy. The post of Legislative Adviser was always held by a Frenchman, and there was a Legislative Commission composed of French experts whose duty it was to draw up a series of Legal Codes. The foreign experts in the Department of the Bangkok City Engineer were usually Frenchmen, there were Italians employed in the Ministry of Public Works, and there were Germans attached to the Northern Railway establishment while British engineers and one or two Italians were attached to that of the Southern Railway. A German was for some time at the head of the Department of Posts and Telegraphs. Attached to the Courts of Justice, in pursuance of the provisions of various Treaties with the Foreign Powers, were a number of Judges and Legal Advisers, most of whom were of British and French nationality, though at the beginning some of them were Belgian. The Siamese Government was thus eclectic in its choice of advisers, but it was the British who predominated.

During the greater part of the time of which I am writing the advisers exercised a very considerable influence and some

of them (in the Police and Gendarmerie, for example) were allowed to fill positions of executive authority. With the exception of those employed under the Ministry of Justice, who were attached to the Courts in virtue of definite Treaty obligations assumed towards the Foreign Powers, these counsellors had been engaged by the Siamese Government upon its own initiative. There was no compulsion from outside in the matter. The Siamese were under no obligation to any one as to the particular departments to which advisers should be appointed, as to what their nationality should be or as to what should be the scope and nature of their duties. If in practice a certain rule and a certain method were followed in regard to nationality—for instance, if the General Adviser was always an American, the Financial Adviser always British and the Legislative Adviser always a Frenchman—that was because the Siamese Government found this the most prudent course to adopt in view of the general line of foreign policy which it was consistently pursuing. In the heyday of their influence the advisers were consulted not merely on purely routine or technical matters, but also on the policy of the Government itself as well as of their particular departments. Thus, the General, Financial, Judicial and Legislative Advisers used to be styled Advisers to the Government in their respective spheres, and this was also the case with the majority of the other departmental advisers. The General and Financial Advisers in particular exercised a powerful voice in the actual shaping of the country's policy. The services rendered by all of these counsellors to Siam have been conspicuous, and without their aid the Siamese monarchs would certainly have been unable to carry out their successful policy of depriving Western Governments of any excuse for intervening in the internal affairs of the country. In recent days, however, the tendency of the Siamese Government has been to rely less and less upon the counsel of the advisers, and for a long time past the custom has been discontinued of appointing foreigners to executive positions. This tendency, which was already observable to some degree under King Rama VI, was carried further during the first portion of the reign of King Prajadhipok and still further under the *régime* set up in 1932. In the end no more Advisers to the Government were appointed, but only Advisers to Departments, who were styled as such.

Up to 1909 the system of ex-territoriality prevailed, whereby

British subjects resident in Siam were not justiciable to the Siamese tribunals, but to their own consular courts. In 1883, however, this system had been modified as regards Northern Siam, where British subjects who were in the position of defendants or accused were made justiciable to an International Court, with Siamese judges assisted by a British consular officer and by a European legal adviser. Under the terms of the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 this arrangement was extended to Bangkok and to other parts of the country, and, in 1925, under a fresh Anglo-Siamese agreement, further modifications were effected which made the Siamese Courts of Justice almost, but not quite, free from outside control. Similar ex-territorial privileges were enjoyed by the nationals of the other Treaty Powers and similar modifications of those privileges were brought about in their case also. But it was not only in the jurisdiction of her courts that Siam was restricted by the instruments signed with various Powers ; she had agreed not to impose import duties above a certain figure upon merchandise entering the country from abroad, and she had likewise consented to the enjoyment by the subjects of the Treaty Powers of the same rights as Siamese nationals in matters of trade and commerce. This was, in fact, for Siam the era of "Unequal Treaties", from which she did not disengage herself until the years 1937 and 1938, when she negotiated revised agreements with the Powers concerned upon a basis of complete reciprocity and full autonomy for herself in all respects. The last remaining traces of ex-territoriality then disappeared and, for the first time in her modern history, she was admitted to the Family of Nations on terms of absolute equality. It is a melancholy thought that she was destined to fall from her newly won high estate and to pass under the domination of Japan only four years afterwards.

CHAPTER VII

CONDITIONS IN THE OLD SIAM (*continued*)

THE white community at Bangkok in 1941 was less numerous than it had been when I first arrived in 1904, a circumstance which was due in large part to the reduced number of Western officials employed by the Siamese Government. Throughout the whole of my time the British community was the largest of the western colonies in Siam. The second largest white colony was the Danish; the German community was almost as big, and there were a number of French, Italians, Dutch and Belgians. Many of the French consisted of Roman Catholic missionaries. The American community was one of the most important, but it was strongest, numerically speaking, in the provinces, where the American Presbyterian Mission maintained several stations. Of late years the Japanese community had been growing steadily, though, up to the time of the Japanese invasion, it never comprised more than a few hundred persons. Under Kings Chulalongkorn and Rama VI the Japanese were conspicuous by their absence and Japanese influence was negligible. There has long been a considerable British Indian population in Siam which, in 1941, probably numbered about fifty thousand persons. At the beginning of the present century there were at Bangkok something like sixteen hundred residents of white race. In the old days there were a good many more Europeans in the north than in 1941, a fact which is to be explained by the decline of the teak industry, which was chiefly in British hands. On the other hand, when I first went to Siam there were very few Europeans to be found in the Southern Provinces, whereas in later years large numbers of Europeans (in which term I include Australians) came to be employed in that region, owing to the development of tin-mining. British subjects of white race in the whole of Siam have, I think, never amounted to as many as a thousand persons.

In 1904 the Northern Railway had only been constructed as

far as Paknampoh, some 160 miles from Bangkok, whilst the Southern Railway had not yet been taken beyond Petchaburi (105 miles), and the North-Eastern Line did not extend farther than Korat (165 miles). The construction of the Eastern Line had only just begun. By 1932 Siam's railway system had almost reached its present much more developed stage, but at the moment of my first arrival and for a considerable time afterwards the possibilities for travel by railroad were distinctly limited and journeys were still further restricted by the almost complete absence of highways. Communication between Bangkok and the Southern Provinces or Singapore was effected exclusively by sea, whilst Northern Siam could be reached from the capital only by the laborious method of embarking in small boats at Paknampoh and of being poled up-river. I myself made one such journey from Paknampoh to Nakhon Lampang—a journey which can now be performed by railroad in a single day but which then took about three weeks. For that time I was obliged to live, move and have my being in a river-boat with a tiny cabin in the stern measuring about seven feet by four and scarcely high enough for me to stand up. In the bow was a little platform measuring a good deal less, and here my undefeated Chinese cook improvised a kitchen from which, with the help of a certain amount of tinned food, he used to serve up a two-course lunch and a three-course dinner every day! He would bake excellent bread in an oven made by him out of a kerosene tin. Cross-country travel in those days was accomplished along the rivers and canals in Central Siam or, during the dry season, over the flat rice-fields; in the north there were only tracks along which, when I was making an official tour of the country, I used to proceed on foot or by pony, my baggage, together with that of my clerks and servants, being carried on transport elephants or mules. The gradual creation of a system of highways has since made this last method of travel obsolete in all except the most remote districts. Travel with transport elephants, I may say, is a very slow affair, for the elephant, strange as it may appear, is a delicate creature and can only too easily die upon one's hands; he must not be overloaded, he must not be made to go too far (about sixteen miles a day is the safety limit), and he must not be employed during the hottest hours for fear of sunstroke.

In 1904 Bangkok bore a most evil reputation for unhealthiness, and I was not a little perturbed, when passing through Singapore on my way out from England, by a resident there who expressed the hope that I had brought my coffin with me ! I discovered that this sinister reputation was based on the prevalence of cholera at Bangkok at the end of every dry season, when the water in the river and canals was at its lowest. There was at that period no proper water supply, the native population obtaining its drinking water from the River Menam, or from the many canals connected with it. The members of the foreign community relied upon rain-water collected from the roofs of their houses during the wet months of the year and stored up in tanks. Since cholera is largely a water-borne disease, and since the canals and the river were particularly infected with it in the driest months, it is not surprising that serious epidemics occurred regularly every year. From these even foreigners were not exempt, for, though they might confine themselves to drinking the uncontaminated water stored in their tanks, they could not exercise absolute control over the washing of their plates and dishes and of their drinking-vessels in pantry and kitchen. Thus it came about that each year the mortality from cholera among the Siamese was very high and that it also assumed alarming proportions, regard being had to their small numbers, among the European residents of the city as well. When the hottest months came upon us, therefore, we could not help being seized with apprehension and, sure enough, every year some of us would be carried off by this malady. The onset of the disease would be sudden and its course appallingly swift ; it is no exaggeration to say that one might be conversing with a friend at the bar of the club one evening and attending his funeral the next. There was only one remedy for such a distressing state of affairs, and that was the installation of a scientific water supply system. Happily, this was achieved somewhere about the year 1907 and the result was almost magical. Cholera ceased to be the haunting terror that it had always been at the close of the hot season ; epidemics became rare and it was soon evident that, but for this scourge, Bangkok was by no means an unhealthy city, if account were taken of its tropical situation. Outside Bangkok, however, hygienic conditions are far from satisfactory to this day and the public health services are still inadequate for the needs of the population.

Those were easy days for the foreign Diplomatic Representatives, who were chiefly occupied with attempts to secure for their respective countries as large a share as possible of the contracts awarded by the Government departments from time to time for the supply of material to the Army or Navy or to the various public utility services (railways, irrigation, etc.). Another source of preoccupation for the foreign diplomats lay in the effort to bring about the engagement of as many advisers of their own nationality as they could. There were more serious preoccupations when the Great War of 1914-18 broke out, but the anxieties of the Representatives of the Allied Nations were relieved after King Rama VI had decided that Siam should enter the war on their side, and had ordered the arrest and internment of all Germans and Austrians resident in the country. It was to be a very different story in later years, when Japanese intrigues in Siam were a constant source of anxiety to the British Minister, who ended up by being interned himself!

Looking back on the past I conclude that, all things considered, it was more fun to be living in Siam when I was a young man than it came to be in later days, and in that feeling, which I do not ascribe merely to the fact that I have grown older, I think we may find the measure of the difference between the old and the new Siam. Conditions of life in Siam at that time had about them more of a special, unique flavour of their own. We were comparatively secluded from the rest of the world and what we saw going on around us was for that reason of a more individual nature and more racy of the soil. For example, the time-honoured pageants and the various picturesque habits and customs of past days still survived among the natives of the country to a much greater extent than is the case now, when more frequent Western contacts have done so much to foster Occidental ways of living and thinking among the educated class of Siamese. These have now begun to substitute (as is happening in so many other countries in the Far East) a kind of mass culture which is common, as regards its outward attributes, at any rate, to the generality of mankind for the indigenous culture which used to be so peculiar to themselves. In the old days if one wandered at all far from the capital, the means of travel employed were of a primitive and even romantic sort, whilst the people and their ways in one part of the Kingdom

differed noticeably from those to be found in another. Nowadays the stamp of uniformity is being impressed upon the population everywhere, and journeys are no longer undertaken with the help of transport elephants or in old-fashioned boats painfully poled up-river, but by the more prosaic method of locomotion by train or automobile. Romance, in fact, has flown out at the window as modern progress has come in at the door.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME PERSONALITIES IN THE OLD SIAM

I WILL conclude my account of what I have called the Old Siam with references to a few of the leading personalities in it other than King Chulalongkorn, whose portrait I have already attempted to draw.

Opinions are divided as to the merits of King Rama VI. It would be idle to pretend that he came up to the stature of his father, and during his lifetime he estranged the more seriously minded among his subjects by his extravagance, his fondness for display and his regrettable tendency to favouritism. On the other hand, whatever may have been his defects of character, he was, like so many members of the Siamese Royal Family, of unquestionably high intelligence. He had a real taste for literature and, what was more, he was the author of poems and plays of genuine merit. Although his own compositions were in the modern style, he was a generous and enthusiastic supporter of the traditional Siamese drama and ballet, and he was at the same time a sedulous preacher of the gospel of patriotism and of faith in the future of the Siamese nation. He died at the comparatively early age of forty-four. After his death his reputation sank to its nadir, but it revived after the *coup d'état* of 1932, and it is the fashion among present-day Siamese nationalists to extol him as a great patriotic leader. I suspect that this rehabilitation of King Rama VI may be partly due to a reaction against his successor, King Prajadhipok, who was by no means popular with the founders of the new *régime*. Whilst he was alive King Rama VI shocked many Siamese, not only by his extravagance, but also by the way in which he took his pleasure. For example, he caused a toy town to be built at much expense in the neighbourhood of one of the Royal Palaces, and here he and his entourage would amuse themselves for hours by riding on a miniature railroad and in other somewhat childish pastimes. So, too, with His Majesty's intense love for the stage. He was not content to write or to translate plays ; he often acted in them himself. To the more conservative among his courtiers this sort of thing was an abomination and a very great lowering of

the Royal dignity. And there was his Corps of "Wild Tigers", which every official of any standing was obliged to join—a sort of adult Boy Scout movement, which no one except the King took very seriously and which bored most of its members infinitely.

In fine, he advertised himself as a super-playboy and so undermined to a certain degree with his subjects the traditional respect and veneration in which they usually held their monarchs. In that sense he helped to some extent to bring on the *coup d'état*. But King Rama VI, who never concealed his feeling of cordial friendship for Britain, deserved much credit for his courage in bringing Siam into the last world war on the side of the Allies at a moment when German propaganda was doing us considerable harm in certain quarters at Bangkok. He was sent to England for his education whilst still a boy and proceeded afterwards to Oxford and to Sandhurst. For a time he was attached to a battalion of the Durham Light Infantry and, after his accession to the Throne, King George V conferred on him the honorary rank of a General in the British Army.

The mother of King Rama VI, Queen Saovabha Pongsri, was a strong personality and exercised great influence over King Chulalongkorn, to whom she bore five sons, the eldest being King Rama VI and the youngest King Prajadhipok. Between these two came Prince Chakrabongse (also known as the Prince of Pitsanuloke) and two other Princes. All three of the above died during the lifetime of Rama VI, who himself left no male issue, so that, when he passed away in November, 1925, he was followed on the Throne by his brother, Prince Prajadhipok, who for most of his life had been far from expecting that he would ever succeed to the monarchy. Queen Saovabha Pongsri survived her husband and died in 1917.

The demise of the Prince of Pitsanuloke, who had been educated in Russia, was a national misfortune, for he possessed strong character and acknowledged ability. Had he lived long enough, he would have been the successor of King Rama VI. He married a Russian lady, by whom he had one son, Prince Chula Chakrabongse, educated in England, where he is now residing.

Whilst King Chulalongkorn was still alive King Rama VI was the Crown Prince, and immediately after him in order of precedence came the late Prince Bhanurangsi, who was a full brother of King Chulalongkorn and was usually known as the

"Ong Noi", or the "Little Prince". The "Ong Noi" was a Royalty of the old school with the most charming manners in the world and was very popular with the European community. He was the father of Prince Birabongse (B. Bira), the well-known amateur motor-racing driver, who is at present living in England together with Prince Chula.

Apart from the sovereign himself, the two outstanding figures in Siamese public life during the reign of King Chulalongkorn were his half-brothers, Prince Devawongse and Prince Damrong. Prince Devawongse held a world record. He retained the portfolio of Foreign Affairs for about forty years, a period equalled by no other Foreign Minister in any country. His skill and address were proverbial, and he continued to hold his portfolio up to the time of his death under Rama VI. He was a full brother of Queen Saovabha Pongsri. The other outstanding figure, Prince Damrong, was Minister of the Interior during the latter half of King Chulalongkorn's reign and for a short time afterwards. He was responsible for reorganising the system of internal administration throughout the provinces, and the debt which his country owes to him on that account is very great. Prince Damrong was an accomplished scholar, historian and archaeologist as well as a distinguished statesman, and, after his retirement from the Ministry of the Interior in the reign of King Rama VI, he continued to render meritorious service by assuming charge of the National Library. He was both wise and witty in his conversation and he maintained cordial contact with the members of the Diplomatic Corps, by whom he was greatly liked and respected. After the *coup d'état* of June, 1932, Prince Damrong left Siam and took up his residence at Penang, where he was living when the Japanese invaded Malaya at the close of 1941. Some time afterwards he returned to Bangkok, where he died recently at the age of 81 years.

It is worthy of note that, although Prince Devawongse and Prince Damrong both spoke English fairly well, they, like King Chulalongkorn, had received their education exclusively in Siam. They were conspicuously able servants of the State who set a worthy example to the next generation of Siamese. Prince Damrong had been twice to Europe, where he made the acquaintance of Their Majesties King George V and Queen Mary, for both of whom he entertained a profound respect.

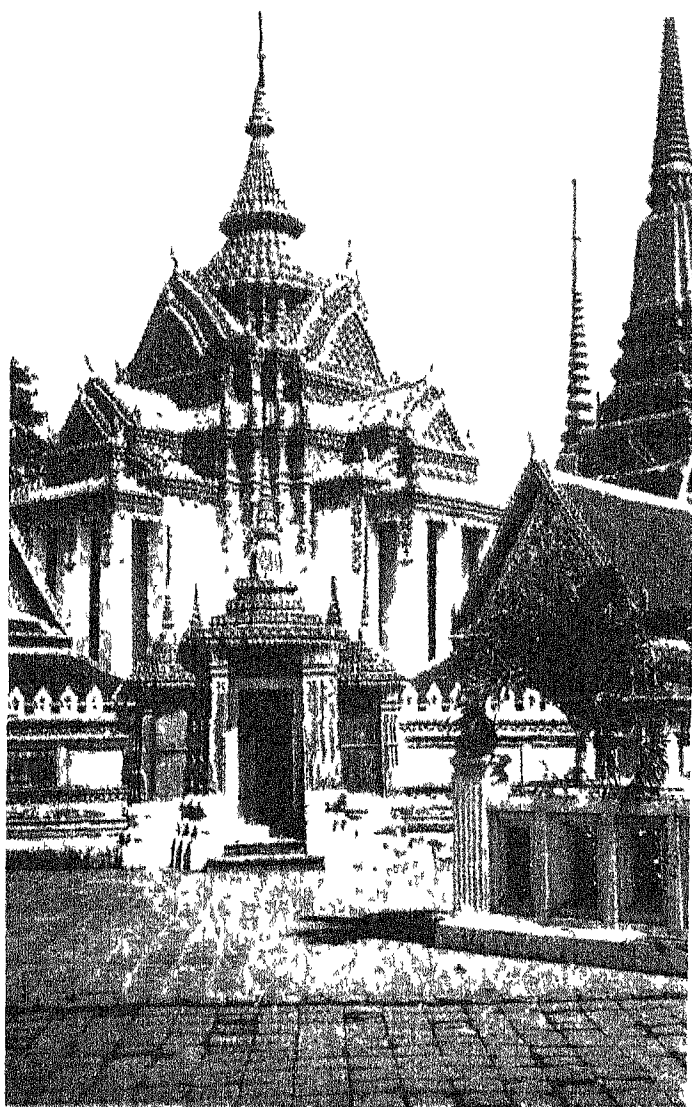
Among other half-brothers of King Chulalongkorn was

Prince Narisra, an authority on Siamese art and an artist himself, who acted as Regent when King Prajadhipok left Siam for England shortly after the *coup d'état*. He was universally respected and was still alive in 1942.

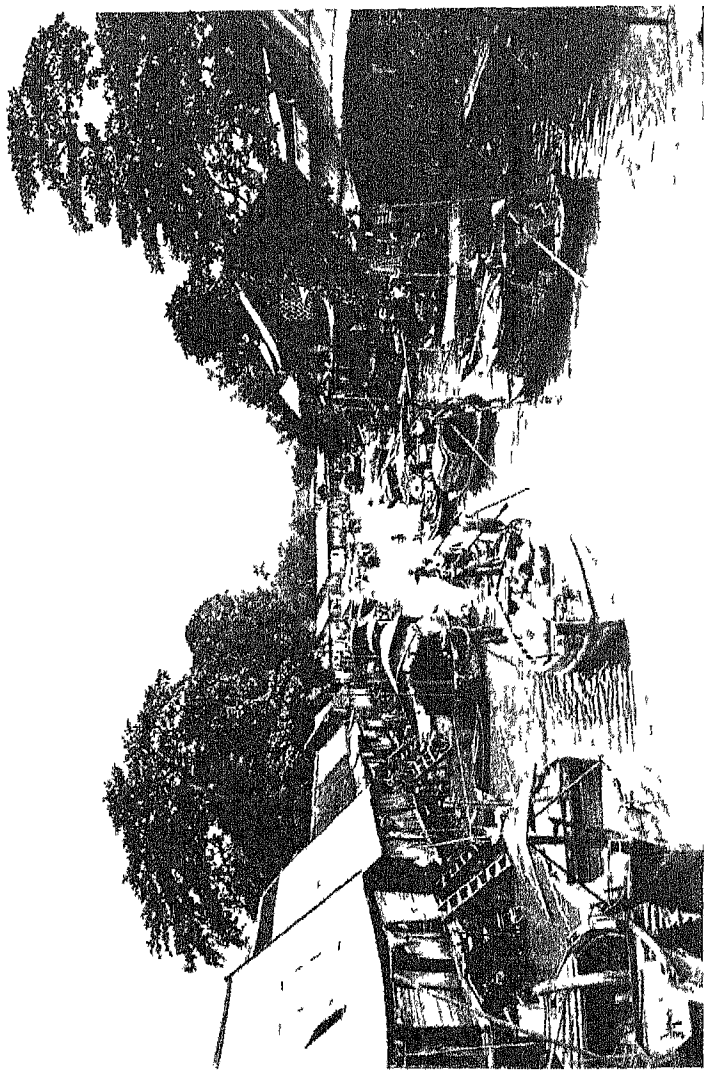
Apart from King Rama VI and his full brothers, the following were among the most prominent of King Chulalongkorn's sons : (i) Prince Paribatra, also known as the Prince of Nagor Svarga, a Prince of exceptionally high rank who had been educated in Germany and who filled many important offices under his father and under Rama VI. He was particularly obnoxious to the promoters of the *coup d'état*, after which event he took up his residence in Java, where he is reported to have died not long since. (ii) Prince Rabi, who studied law in England and created a modern judicial system in Siam. He died many years ago. (iii) Prince Purachatra, also known as the Prince of Kambaeng Bejra, who was educated at Harrow and in the British Army and possessed exceptional energy and capacity. He had a *penchant* for mechanical devices of all kinds and made an excellent Minister of Communications, much being done under his auspices to develop and improve the system of State Railways. He established himself after the *coup d'état* at Singapore, where he subsequently died.

Both King Chulalongkorn and King Rama VI showed wisdom in not restricting the choice of their Ministers of State and other high officials to members of the Royal House, but in selecting a proportion of commoners to fill key positions in the Administration. One of the most distinguished of these was Chao Phya Yomaraj, who held ministerial portfolios under the two monarchs just mentioned. He passed into eclipse during the reign of King Prajadhipok, but he emerged again to become, as an old man, a member of the Council of Regency set up after the abdication of that sovereign and the elevation to the Throne of the youthful King Ananda Mahidol. He is now dead.

It will have been observed that, with the exception of Chao Phya Yomaraj, all of the outstanding figures among the Siamese to whom I have referred in this chapter belong to the Royal Family. To the sagacity of the members of the Royal House of Chakri, indeed, the Siamese nation owes an incalculable debt, both for the preservation of its sovereign status through the wise policy of compounding with the advance of Western civilisation, instead of resisting it, initiated by King Mongkut and continued



A CORNER OF BANGKOK'S LARGEST TEMPLE ("WAT CHULALONGKORN")



A CANAL SCENE AT BANGKOK

by King Chulalongkorn, and for their services as its most enlightened, most capable and most progressive leaders. The general standard of ability revealed by the Siamese Royal Family throughout the past hundred years has been astonishingly high and would do credit to any country. This being so, I deem it singularly unfortunate that her Royal Family should have failed Siam in 1932, when she was faced with the gravest crisis in her history since the fall of Ayuthia. It was the advice of the Princes which then deterred King Prajadhipok from fulfilling his wish to grant to his people political concessions which were already overdue, and the tendency of those same Princes under him to revert to the policy of reserving the high offices of State for themselves was one of the factors which helped to bring about the revolution.

SECTION III

SIAM AND THE GREAT POWERS

CHAPTER IX

GENERAL

AMONG the factors which have gone to the making of the present-day Siam must be reckoned her relations with the Great Powers, which for the past century have been of such vital importance to her. The conduct of those relations represents a continuous process to which that great year of change, 1932, made no substantial difference, for the basic lines of Siamese foreign policy were common to both the old and the new *régimes*. It was a policy founded on the balance of power in South-Eastern Asia, and, if Japan came to count for as much as she did after the revolution, the synchronism was fortuitous and was not a sequence of cause and effect, for there was in fact no fundamental change in the main lines of the country's diplomacy, which still sought desperately to maintain a state of equilibrium as between contending outside forces. The following chapters in this section consequently both look back to the past and, in the light of it, seek to explain much of what, in 1932, was still the future. Inevitably, there is some overlapping and upon occasion it has been necessary to anticipate. The chapter on China stands apart from the rest of the section as dealing with problems which do not concern the international balance of power. It fell to the new Siam to grapple with them and to earn some opprobrium thereby, but the issues involved had their roots in the past, and would have had to be tackled sooner or later even if the old *régime* had remained in existence.

Whilst on the subject of Siam's foreign relations, I must utter a word of warning. It may be thought that the history of Siam before the reign of King Mongkut proves Siam to have been an aggressive nation, constantly going to war to extend its frontiers. Such a view would not be justified. Those were the times of dynastic wars, not waged because of the aggressive nature of the

peoples concerned, or even as a result of pressure of population or of economic necessity. They were usually caused by the lust for power and glory of individual monarchs, who never dreamt of consulting the wishes of their subjects. For example, the King of Burma attacked Ayuthia in 1563 because of personal jealousy. The Siamese King had no fewer than seven white elephants in his possession, and His Burmese Majesty wished to obtain at least two of these sacred animals for himself! Since in a later section I shall have to discuss the question of Siamese chauvinism, it will be well to make it clear at this point that chauvinism, as generally understood, was not apparent in Siam to my knowledge before the *coup d'état* had brought the military faction to great influence, and afterwards to supreme authority. Before that time the Siamese, as I knew them, were good nationalists in the sense that they were good patriots, but they did not then betray any particular desire to encroach upon the territory of their neighbours, and anti-foreign feeling among them was not discernible. The one exception was to be found in the widespread irredentist feeling against France, to which I shall refer later. This moderate attitude on the part of the Siamese people and of their leaders is not to be explained merely by their tolerant disposition but is in great measure due to the circumstance that Siam had always remained essentially an independent and sovereign country. Since she had never been subject to the domination of alien rulers, the Siamese people had no reason for regarding foreigners with aversion.

Lest the case of China, where xenophobia has at times been very prevalent, should be quoted in refutation of the above opinion, I would observe that the "unequal Treaties" never weighed so hardly upon Siam as they did upon the Chinese. There were no foreign concessions in Siam and the obnoxious system of ex-territoriality had been frequently diluted before its final disappearance about six years ago. Moreover, unlike China, Siam had never been the object of punitive expeditions despatched against her by the Treaty Powers, if we leave out of account the incident with France in 1893. The first effects of the general "awakening of Asia" thus went no further than to intensify in the Siamese their comprehensible and legitimate desire to exercise their sovereignty to the fullest possible degree, by ridding themselves of the unequal Treaties. National pride was as much involved in that desire as the wish to be freed from

restrictions embarrassing in themselves. Up to 1932—or at least up to the time, not long before that year, when Japan was beginning to assert her influence throughout the Far East—Siamese participation in the “awakening of Asia” went no further than that. Before then there were no signs of any Pan-Asiatic feeling among the Siamese, nor do I think that such a feeling exists among them even to-day. There was colour-feeling, of course, which made the Siamese object strongly to being classed as inferior to people of white race; but since Siam was an independent country and since so many Occidental employecs were in her service, social relations between the Siamese and the Western community in the capital were always easy and pleasant, and I can say honestly that throughout all my period of residence there I was never conscious of a colour-bar on either side in my contacts with my Siamese friends. Aside from the question of colour, the educated Siamese were inclined to found upon the circumstance of their independence a certain attitude of superiority to the inhabitants of adjacent territories under foreign rule, and they were rather disposed to look upon themselves as ranking with white folk among the superior races in the Far East. It is important to bear these facts in mind, for they demonstrate that the Siamese, if left to themselves and not subjected to propaganda from interested quarters, are inspired with no unfriendly sentiments towards the Western Powers in general, at whose hands they have, on a balance, benefited a good deal more than they have suffered.

CHAPTER X

RELATIONS WITH GREAT BRITAIN

It has been said already that English merchants of the East India Company had established factories at Ayuthia and Patani in the course of the seventeenth century. They were not very successful, however, and the factories were subsequently closed, the Company preferring to concentrate its attention on trade with India and to leave the Dutch in possession of the field in Siam. At the end of the eighteenth century Penang was leased to the East India Company by the Sultan of Kedah, of whose dominions it then formed a part. The strained relations, more than once resulting in hostilities, between Kedah and Bangkok had the effect of reviving interest in Siam on the part of the British authorities in charge at Penang. In 1826 a Treaty with Siam was concluded by Captain H. Burney, on behalf of the Governor-General of India, who was in supreme control of the Penang establishment. This agreement accorded a certain number of trading facilities to British subjects, but Captain Burney failed to achieve one of the objects of his mission, which was to secure the restoration of the Sultan of Kedah, who had fled from the Siamese and had taken shelter at Penang. He was able, however, to obtain the insertion in his Treaty of a clause whereby Siam undertook not to "go and molest" Kelantan and Trengganu. In 1855 Sir John Bowring visited Bangkok and negotiated, on behalf of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce to which allusion has been made previously as having thrown Siam open for the first time to foreign trade and enterprise. Prior to that date trade with Siam had been conducted on restricted and precarious lines; foreign merchants had been admitted to the country, but their operations had been hampered by disabilities and difficulties of a very disheartening kind.

From 1855 right up to the time of the Japanese invasion in December, 1941, Britain was the foreign Power most strongly entrenched in Siam and counting for most with the Siamese people. There are a number of reasons to account for this predominance. In 1855 and for long afterwards Britain was the

Western Power which exercised most influence over Far Eastern affairs and she was, moreover, the immediate neighbour of Siam by virtue of her possession of Burma and Malaya. Furthermore, it was the British who, in consequence of their establishment at Penang, were the first Occidentals to renew with Siam those Western contacts which had been cut off, in the latter half of the seventeenth century, by reason of the incident with the French under King Narai already related. Sir John Bowring, too, secured an advantage for his country by being the first to conclude with Siam a Treaty upon a wide basis, and there was a yet more potent factor operating in the growing volume of British trade with Siam and the number of British merchants who were attracted to the country in consequence. Thus it happened that there were always a greater number of British advisers and experts in the employ of the Siamese Government than of any other nationality, and that for a long time more Siamese students were sent to England for instruction than to any other country.

In the course of time the Siamese showed less of a tendency to put all their eggs into one basket in these respects ; advisers and experts were called in from other quarters, whilst students came to be despatched also to France, to Germany, to Belgium and to the United States and, at the very end, to Japan and to the Philippine Islands as well. But even so, Britain never lost wholly the start which she had gained in 1855, although in 1941 her influence was no longer as great as it had been. In the latter year the British Empire was still the most important of all the foreign participators in the export and import trade of Siam, although in exports to Siam Japan was already overhauling us rapidly and had gained a lead over the United Kingdom considered as a unit by itself. Politically, too, Japan was busily engaged in the attempt to undermine us.

It is to be observed that, since 1855 at any rate, English has been the only foreign language in anything like general use in Siam. It is employed by the Government as the official language of diplomacy, it is the language of commerce and it is taught in the schools.

I have already alluded to the revision, in 1937 and 1938, of Siam's Treaties with the various foreign Powers on a basis of full reciprocity, whereby she achieved at last complete freedom of action in all respects, including the unfettered jurisdiction of

her courts over foreign nationals, as well as the right to impose customs duties upon imported merchandise at her discretion. Up to then British relations with Siam had been governed by a new Treaty of Commerce and Navigation signed in London in 1925, and by a further Treaty signed on the same day which dealt with the jurisdiction applicable in Siam to British subjects. By 1937 the latter instrument had ceased to be effective, except in so far as concerned article 2 of the Protocol attached to it, which stipulated that the right of consular evocation from the Siamese tribunals should continue until five years after the promulgation of all the Siamese Legal Codes, which were in course of preparation at that time.* The 1925 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation was formally denounced by the Siamese Government in course of time and became due to expire on 25th November, 1937. It was replaced by a fresh Anglo-Siamese Treaty on the desired basis of full reciprocity, signed at Bangkok on 23rd November of that same year by the Siamese Foreign Minister (Luang Pradist) and myself as representing His Majesty's Government; the ratifications were exchanged in the following month of February. This agreement was not actually the first of the revised Treaties concluded by Siam with foreign countries to come into operation; but it was Britain who took the initiative as regards the abolition of the right of evocation, which still existed in virtue of the fact that the Siamese Legal Codes had not yet been promulgated in their entirety. The Siamese Government was particularly anxious to get rid as soon as possible of this solitary lingering vestige of the ex-territorial system, and it was greatly pleased when His Majesty's Government agreed voluntarily to relinquish it simultaneously with the conclusion of the new Treaty of Commerce and Navigation, upon condition that the Siamese Government should undertake to submit to the Legislature, within a period of twelve months, "an act on the Conflict of Laws embodying the normal principles of private international law, including expressly the law of nationality in matters of personal status". This undertaking was given readily and by means of an exchange of Notes between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and myself dated, like the newest Treaty of Com-

* By the right of evocation is meant the right of a foreign consul to withdraw from the Siamese tribunals, and to try in his own court, cases in which one of his own nationals was the defendant or accused person and in which he considered it to be in the interests of justice that he should take this action.

merce and Navigation itself, 23rd November, 1937, we consequently abandoned the right of evocation. Thus it came about that Britain was not only the country which inaugurated the system of ex-territoriality in Siam, but was also, eighty years afterwards, the first foreign country to agree to its complete abandonment. Profiting by our example, the Siamese were able to persuade the other Powers to follow suit in respect of their own right of consular evocation.

On 12th June, 1940, I signed at Bangkok on behalf of my Government yet another Anglo-Siamese Treaty in the form of a Pact of Non-Aggression, the Siamese signatory being Luang Pibul Songgram, the Prime Minister, then holding the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. This agreement, which was to be valid for five years and was subject to denunciation thereafter by one year's notice on either side, provided for the reciprocal respect by each country of the other's territorial integrity. It was further laid down that, if one country became involved in war with a third party, the other would refrain from affording aid or assistance to such third party. There hangs a tale by this Treaty, which Siam violated subsequently when she associated herself with Japan and declared war upon us. The idea of a pact of this nature with Siam had originated with the French and was afterwards taken up by Luang Pibul, who suggested Treaties of Non-Aggression with both Paris and London. After consultation between the British and French Governments, Treaties for signature at Bangkok by the French Minister and myself were accordingly drawn up on identical lines and were accepted by the Siamese Government, both of them being signed on one and the same morning at the official residence of Luang Pibul. The Siamese made quite an occasion of the ceremony, which was attended by Press photographers in force. The ratifications of our own Pact were exchanged between Luang Pibul and myself on 31st August, 1940, but the Pact with France was never ratified, as the Siamese refused in the event to confirm it unless the French Government acceded to their demands in the matter of a readjustment of the frontier with Indo-China.*

It was significant that, when the Siamese Government, in order to round things off, suggested to the Government in Tokyo the conclusion of a similar Non-Aggression Pact with Japan, the Japanese should have declined to adopt the British and French

* See Chapter XIX.

model for the purpose in view. They negotiated with the Siamese instead a "Treaty concerning the continuance of friendly relations and mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity". In addition to stipulations analogous to those contained in the Pacts with Britain and France, this instrument confirmed the existing friendly relations between Japan and Siam, providing further for an exchange of information and for consultation upon matters of mutual interest. In conformity with the desire of the Japanese Government, this Treaty was signed in Tokyo on the same day as the agreements with ourselves and the French were signed at Bangkok. The refusal of Japan to associate herself with Britain and France in this matter may be regarded either as the shadow of coming events, or as a sign of unwillingness on her part to align herself in any way with the enemies of Germany and Italy.

British relations with Siam between 1855 and 1941 were both consistently friendly and never seriously troubled. A bone of contention had, however, existed from early days in the question of the rights of Siam in the southern portion of the Malay Peninsula. The possibility of further dispute over this issue was removed by the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909, under which Siam transferred to the British Crown her suzerain rights over the States of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu and over adjacent islands. Over these States, inhabited by Moslem Malays who differed entirely from the Siamese in race, language, culture and religion, Siam had exercised no more than a nominal authority and they had remained practically independent, though shortly before 1909 Bangkok had been endeavouring to strengthen its hold over them and had attached Advisers (who were of British nationality) to the rulers of three of them. All four, however, were in a backward condition, and the time had come when it was necessary to reorganise their administration along modern and progressive lines. Britain, which had only just performed such a task with great success in the adjoining Federated Malay States, was the agent plainly indicated for the fulfilment of this purpose, inasmuch as the Siamese themselves were too busily occupied in setting their own house in order to be qualified for the rendering of a like service to other people. The transfer of sovereignty to which the Siamese Government agreed in 1909 was thus no more than a common-sense measure. Siam received a *quid pro quo* in the shape of the abandonment by Great

Britain to a very large extent of her ex-territorial rights, and of a loan of £4,000,000 from the Government of the Federated Malay States for the purpose of constructing and operating a railway which was to connect Bangkok with Singapore.

This arrangement was not popular in certain Siamese circles at the time, and advantage was taken of it by Germany after the outbreak of the world war of 1914-18 to arouse feeling against us, more especially among officers in the Army. But this feeling was allayed after King Rama VI had brought his country into that war on our side, and thereafter the question remained a dead issue until it was revived again, largely at the instigation of the Japanese, after the rise to power of Luang Pibul and the military party. Until that time arrived, I can myself testify that there was no irredentist feeling discernible against us on the part of the Siamese with respect to their past shadowy claims to supremacy in the southern half of the Malay Peninsula.

On the whole it can be said that the Siamese respected and liked us, though for long they were inclined to regard Britain with suspicion as a Western Power established in dangerously close proximity to them, for they were disposed to consider all Western Powers as rapacious with the exception of the United States of America, which had no territorial axe to grind in the Far East. Later on, however, as it became evident to all the world that we had no aggressive designs in Asia, the Siamese came to trust us and to look upon Britain as a friend on whom they could rely. They felt that they knew the worst about us and that our worst was not too bad ; they gave us credit for our good qualities, though they doubtless made reservations with respect to what they judged to be our defects. Above all, they were familiar with our ways and in our case familiarity had certainly not bred aversion in them.

CHAPTER XI

RELATIONS WITH FRANCE

THE entry of France upon the stage in Siam in the seventeenth century was attended with the results which have already been described. It was not until 1856 that the French, by then established in Cochin-China, resumed their contacts with the Siamese by negotiating with them a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce after the model of the one which Great Britain had concluded a year previously. In 1867 Cambodia, which up to then had been a reluctant tributary of Siam with a King of her own ruling at Pnompenh, became a French Protectorate with the exception of the provinces of Battambang and Siemrap, which were in the occupation of the Siamese. This marked the beginning of a series of territorial disagreements between France and Siam which were to be the cause of no little bitterness in future years, and the next stage in which occurred in the last decade of the nineteenth century. At that time the Siamese frontiers included territory upon the east bank of the Mekong River and elsewhere which had in the past formed the subject of dispute between Siam, on the one hand, and Annam or Cambodia, on the other. France, which had assumed a protectorate over Annam as well as over Cambodia, took the line that these dependencies of Siam belonged to one or other of those two countries and should be restored to them. Collisions over that issue took place between French and Siamese troops in the neighbourhood of the disputed zone, sundry outrages upon the persons of French nationals were alleged to have been perpetrated by the Siamese authorities and, by way of reprisal, the French Fleet occupied some of the islands in the Gulf of Siam. Finally, in July, 1893, two French gunboats forced the passage of the River Menam and an ultimatum was delivered by the French to the Siamese Government, whereafter the French Minister quitted Bangkok and a blockade of that port and of adjacent waters was instituted.

In the event, the terms of the ultimatum were accepted by Siam, which renounced all claim to territory on the east bank of the Mekong ; she also agreed to maintain no military estab-

lishments within the provinces of Battambang and Siemrap or at any point within a radius of twenty-five miles from the west bank of the same river ; she consented further to a military occupation by the French of the port of Chantaboon until such time as the Treaty of Peace then concluded between the two Governments should have been executed and the pacification of the districts concerned should have been effected.

In 1904 a Franco-Siamese Convention was signed, whereby the French consented to evacuate Chantaboon, and to place their nationals in Northern Siam under the jurisdiction of the International Court. In return for these concessions Siam surrendered to France the districts of Dan-Sai and Kratt in the south-east, and renounced her claim to such portion of the State of Luang Prabang as was situated on the west bank of the Mekong. In 1907 a fresh Treaty was concluded between France and Siam, whereby the latter ceded to the former the territories of Battambang and Siemrap, but received back the districts of Dan-Sai and Kratt. This final readjustment of territorial claims held good until the year 1941.

The French could argue in support of their claims that Battambang and Siemrap belonged historically to Cambodia rather than to Siam and that the Siamese hold over Luang Prabang and Vientiane, the two regions concerned on the east bank of the Mekong, had never been really effective. On the other hand, the people of both Luang Prabang and Vientiane were of Thai race and had nothing in common with the population of Annam. In any case, the action of the French in blockading Bangkok was much resented by the Siamese and this feeling was never wholly eradicated, although after the settlement reached in 1907 Franco-Siamese relations improved greatly and had become very friendly by the time of the collapse of France in 1940. Needless to say, already before that event the lingering feeling against the French was being exploited by the Japanese for their own ends ; here were waters which were still somewhat troubled and in which they could fish with advantage.

The incidents of 1893 will go down to history as having come very near to bringing about a war between France and Great Britain, which latter Power was unable to view with equanimity the prospect of further territorial expansion on the part of the French in South-Eastern Asia. On 15th January, 1896, a declaration was accordingly signed in London under which

the Governments of Great Britain and France guaranteed the integrity of the basins of the Menam River and adjacent streams, by engaging that neither of them would, without the consent of the other, advance its armed forces into that area, except in so far as it might do so for any purpose which was required for the maintenance of Siam's independence. A supplementary declaration between Great Britain and France was signed in London in 1904, stipulating that Siamese territory lying to the west of the basin of the Menam River should be considered as falling within the British sphere of influence, while a French sphere of influence was recognised in the case of the possessions of Siam situated to the east of that region. These agreements undoubtedly helped to assure the independence of Siam at a time when it was being gravely threatened, but latter-day Siamese nationalists preferred to take no cognisance of them, and considered it derogatory to the dignity of their country that she should have been made the subject of a bargain between two other Powers without being consulted herself.

The events of 1893 and subsequent years, combined with the fact that France had become Siam's neighbour along the whole extent of her eastern frontier, had inevitably for result that France, like Britain, formed one of the two pivotal points upon which Siamese foreign policy turned during practically the whole of the period following on the opening of the country to foreign intercourse in the reign of King Mongkut. To change the metaphor, for most of that period two fixed stars, those of Britain and France, were to be discerned in the firmament of international politics for Siam. Towards the end, as Japan increased in power and influence, a third star came into view and, now that the other two are in eclipse, it is her sinister planet which, for the time being, reigns alone in the sky. Whilst France has meant so much to the Siamese from the political point of view, the volume of her trade with them has, on the contrary, never been great. In that respect she counted for very much less than either Britain or Japan.

SIAM AND JAPAN

TRADE connections between Siam and Japan date from the beginning of the seventeenth century and, in the days when Ayuthia was the capital of the Siamese Kingdom, the foreign population of that city included a large number of Japanese. Many of them were Christian refugees from religious persecution in their own country, and some of them were incorporated by the King into a Palace Guard under the leadership of an intriguing person named Yamada Nagamasa, who became unpleasantly involved in plots concerning the succession to the Throne. Under his advice friendly relations were opened between the King of Ayuthia and the Japanese Shogun Iyeyasu Minamoto, compliments and presents being exchanged between these two personages on several occasions. Already at that time the Japanese proved themselves to be a turbulent crowd for, in addition to the *démarches* of the leader of the Palace Guard, there was a regrettable incident when a body of them, who were dissatisfied for some reason with the conduct of the King, forced their way into his private apartments and compelled His Majesty to sign in his own blood a document agreeing to their demands. Things finally reached such a pass that, in 1632, the reigning monarch ordered the Japanese quarter at Ayuthia to be attacked suddenly by night, with the result that those Japanese who were not then killed were obliged to flee to Cambodia. Thereafter relations between the two countries lapsed for more than two centuries as a result of Japan's policy of secluding herself rigorously from the rest of the world, and they were not formally renewed until the year 1898, when the Siamese Government negotiated a Treaty with her upon modern lines. So far as recent history is concerned, therefore, Japan is a comparative new-comer into the field of international politics in Siam. Even a quarter of a century ago she did not play a very important *rôle* in that field, though her victory over Russia in the war of 1904-05 gained for her no little prestige with the Siamese in common with other Oriental peoples. Gradually, however, her influence increased as her growing military strength

and her rapidly expanding export trade gained for her a position among the great Powers of the world. But her specific, as distinct from her general, political significance for Siam was first made apparent at the time of her withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933 over the question of her aggressive attitude in Manchuria. The Siamese delegate at Geneva was then instructed by his Government to abstain from voting upon the motion of censure on Japan which was passed by the League in that connection.

It thus happens that Japan began to acquire a special importance from the point of view of Siam just at the moment when a new *régime* had been set up at Bangkok in consequence of the *coup d'état* of 1932. I am anticipating, therefore, when I give the following account of subsequent happenings.

The Japanese have attempted to make great capital out of the Siamese delegate's abstention from voting at Geneva and they have pretended that Siam showed thereby, even at that early date, her willingness to associate herself with them. But there is no valid reason for thinking that such a presentment of the case is in accordance with the facts. The attitude of the Siamese Government of the day in this matter amounted to no more than a timely manifestation of Siam's traditional policy of neutrality in face of international alignments involving those among the great Powers with whom her destinies were closely bound up. In this case she had not been slow to discern that the Japanese were bent upon following their own course in the Far East in defiance, if necessary, of the Western Powers. She would do well, therefore, to take up an impartial position upon so highly contentious an issue. She was not siding *with* the Japanese; on the other hand, by declining to take sides *against* them she was indicating her realisation of the fact that Japan had become, in addition to Britain and France, one of those countries which she could not afford to antagonise.

From that time onwards, in proportion as Japan showed her hand more clearly and as her resolve to dominate the Far East to the exclusion of the Western Powers became more evident, so to a corresponding degree did she come to loom more largely on the Siamese political horizon. Meanwhile, her export trade with Siam had advanced by leaps and bounds until it was second only to that of the British Empire, and she was sparing no effort to increase her hold upon the sympathy and imagination of the

Siamese public. Missions of various kinds having economic, cultural or other objects in view began to arrive frequently at Bangkok from Tokyo, whilst the Siamese were invited to send delegates to conferences convened in Japan from time to time for the purpose of discussing religious and other questions common to the peoples of the Far East. Students from Siam were encouraged to go to Japan for their education by the offer of free scholarships; free trips to Japan were offered to Siamese journalists; and a Japanese business firm made an impression by advertising annually its willingness to defray the cost of a Japanese holiday for the young Siamese woman whom it had become the practice to choose as "Miss Siam" at a beauty show held every year in December. Journalists from Japan now began to visit Siam in considerable numbers and Siamese news items came to figure prominently in the Japanese Press and in the daily bulletins of the Domei News Agency.

On the military side the Japanese were no less active. Alone among the Foreign Powers they maintained both Naval and Military Attachés in permanent residence at Bangkok; and these officers, in addition to canvassing energetically for orders for war material, took every opportunity both of impressing upon the Siamese, and in particular upon the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Defence, the mighty war potential of Japan and also of inflaming their minds against Europeans and Americans, whom they characterised as intruders upon the continent of Asia. In short, the Japanese showed in abundant ways their anxiety to bring Siam over to their camp and to secure her adherence to their "New Order".

From that standpoint Siam was, indeed, of no little importance to them for reasons both of a moral and a practical nature. As one of the few Asiatic countries which (along with Japan herself and China) had remained independent, she occupied a position which was almost unique and the Japanese judged, not unnaturally, that her voluntary espousal of their cause would have considerable weight not only with the other peoples of South-Eastern Asia, but also with public opinion further afield in India. Moreover, as subsequent events were to prove only too well, it was from Siamese territory as a base that an attack could best be delivered against ourselves in Malaya and Burma.

The efforts of the Japanese to draw Siam into their orbit

were intensified after the collapse of France in 1940. From that moment to the end of 1941 Siam developed, diplomatically speaking, into something like a battleground between British and Japanese interests. Japan engaged in this conflict under the slogan of "Asia for the Asiatics"; she also sought to attract the Siamese by dwelling upon the economic benefits of her conception of a "Co-Prosperity Sphere in Greater East Asia", and at the same time she appealed to their religious feelings by stressing the fact that the Japanese and the Siamese peoples both professed the Buddhist faith. We on our part adopted the moderate line (which was none the less efficacious for being moderate) that it was to Siam's advantage to preserve the balance of influence between her powerful neighbours or near-neighbours, that by submitting herself to the ascendancy of Japan she would be forfeiting her independence, that the policy of "Asia for the Asiatics" as understood by Japan was only too likely to mean in practice one of "Asia for the Japanese", and that the so-called "Sphere of Co-Prosperity" implied no more than an invitation to the other participants in it to sacrifice themselves for what must turn out to be the sole benefit of the Japanese nation. Whilst insisting that no other country should be preferred by the Siamese above ourselves, we did not, on the other hand, embarrass them by asking them to extend special treatment to us; in brief, we exhorted them to continue that policy of neutrality which had paid them so handsomely in the past.

There can, I think, be no doubt that up to the very last moment the Siamese—that is, the Government and the intelligentsia, for the people at large have little interest in, and possess less knowledge of, international affairs—were upon the whole very reluctant to take sides in this Anglo-Japanese conflict. Neutrality was in their blood, so that in advising them as we did we were merely counselling them to follow a course in favour of which they were already predisposed by tradition and by instinct. The strength of this instinct for neutrality can be gauged from the circumstance that, even after the outbreak of war in Europe, the initial stages of which went so badly against us—more than that, even after the downfall of France—the Siamese Government continued to steer a middle course and to compromise itself neither with Britain nor with the Axis Powers and Japan. This is not to say that the assiduous wooing of the

Japanese was altogether without effect ; for the question of Japan and her future *rôle* in the Far East became the constant object of Siamese attention, whilst the various advances made by her in the shape of goodwill missions and in other ways were reciprocated in sufficient degree to ensure that the obligations of international courtesy were not neglected. The Siamese returned the compliment by sending to Japan a certain number of missions or delegations, but they were careful not to let the pendulum swing too far in the direction of Tokyo. For example when in 1940 a goodwill mission headed by the Minister of Defence was despatched to Japan, the Siamese Prime Minister followed this step by sending to the Straits Settlements, Burma, India and Australia another goodwill mission under the Minister of Justice. So also, when the Siamese Royal Family Order of Chakri was conferred upon Prince Chichibu of Japan, the same decoration was bestowed immediately afterwards upon His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester. These were something more than straws to show which way the wind was blowing ; they were calculated public manifestations of Siam's neutrality.

I have said previously that, in the course of close upon a century of association with us, the Siamese had learnt to understand our ways and had come to respect us. The same thing cannot be said as regards the Japanese, for modern Japan was a new factor to them, a comparatively unknown quantity, with a policy that resembled in disquieting fashion the much decried, if now outmoded, Imperialism of certain of the Western Powers. This consideration was, in my view, sufficient of itself to prevent the great majority of the Siamese from ever drawing very near to Japan of their own free will. They were shrewd enough to perceive for themselves the real import of the Pan-Asiatic movement sponsored by her, and they were not duped by the lure of the "New Order" and of the "Co-Prosperity Sphere", Japanese inducements to enter which they were disposed to regard in the same light as the invitation to walk into her parlour extended by the spider to the fly. As for the argument about a common religion, this has never weighed for much with the Siamese ; for one thing, the latter profess the Southern form of Buddhism, whilst the former practise the Northern form of it, and there is a great difference between the two ; moreover, the Siamese are well aware that it is not Buddhism, but Shintoism, which is the true national religion of Japan. A further point

to consider is that the Japanese in themselves are not popular with the Siamese and that there seems to be no natural affinity between the two peoples. It is my impression, indeed, that the educated class in Siam has much more in common with the corresponding class in Europe or America than with the equivalent type of person in Japan. In my opinion the Japanese had in their armoury only two effective weapons which they could use against us with the Siamese. In the first place, they could tickle the vanity and arouse the cupidity of the military party by inciting them to set about acquiring territory in the possession of the French or of ourselves. And their second, and by far their most dangerous weapon, was the argument to force ; by harping upon the evident strength of Japan and by picturing Britain as a feeble and decadent Power they made a considerable impression upon the Siamese official class, and it was this argument which ultimately prevailed to the extent of bringing Siam into the war against us.

In 1941 Japan made an astute diplomatic move by appointing an Ambassador to represent her at Bangkok in place of a Minister Plenipotentiary and by arranging for Siam to be similarly represented in Tokyo. The Japanese were the first to pay this compliment to the Siamese and by doing so they flattered not a little the national *amour propre* of the Government. What was more to the point, since they could be pretty sure that none of the other Powers would follow their example, it could be assumed that the Japanese representative at Bangkok, by virtue of his being the sole chief of mission of ambassadorial rank, would become in future the permanent *doyen* of the Diplomatic Corps, with a consequent enhancement of Japanese prestige in Siamese estimation.

The Japanese colony in Siam was formerly not very large, the number of permanent residents amounting to no more than some hundreds. But in addition to these there was latterly a floating population of Japanese, consisting of so-called sight-seers and visitors who penetrated to every corner of the Kingdom and whose principal object was plainly to spy out the land. Some of the visitors were known to be naval or military officers in civilian guise, whilst the permanent residents included the usual number of photographers, doctors and barbers met in other parts of South-Eastern Asia. Certain of these men had been living in the country for many years and it by no means follows

that they were all of them professional spies, though they doubtless kept in touch with their Legation and passed on to it any information likely to be useful. Japanese deep-sea fishermen were active along the coasts both of Siam and Malaya. Though genuinely engaged in the fishing industry, it may be assumed that they did not neglect their exceptional opportunities for making rough charts or for taking marine soundings. More than once they came into collision with the Siamese authorities, by whom some of them were arrested and sent to court on the charge of plying their trade in waters reserved for native fishermen.

For many years the Japanese Government had no consular representatives in Siam outside Bangkok ; it was only in 1940 or 1941 that Japanese Consuls were stationed at Chiangmai and at Singora.

An entirely erroneous impression has gained ground that before the Japanese invasion there were a large, and even a preponderatingly large, number of advisers of Japanese nationality attached to various departments of the Siamese Government. Nothing could be further from the truth. Long ago there was a Japanese judge on the bench of the Court of Appeal at Bangkok, whilst quite recently an expert came from Japan to advise the competent department as to the best methods of cultivating cotton. At one time there were also some experts who gave instruction as to the rearing of silkworms, and there may now and then have been a few Japanese who were employed as experts on other subjects, albeit in minor positions. In general, however, it can be said that Japan has seldom or never furnished advisers to the Siamese Government Departments, although scores of Occidentals have been employed in that capacity. I would observe, nevertheless, that, not long before the critical events of 1941, a considerable number of technicians and workmen were sent from Japan to Bangkok to supervise the erection of an oil refinery, the contract for which had been given by the Government to a Japanese firm.

Reference may here be made to the mythical Kra Canal and to supposed attempts on the part of the Japanese to persuade the Siamese Government to proceed to its construction, in order to by-pass Singapore and to achieve other dark purposes. The truth is that the idea of such a canal has never been taken seriously by the well-informed and that it was exploded by a British

surveyor who visited the spot over fifty years ago. The original suggestion was for the cutting of a water-way across the Isthmus of Kra, which forms the narrowest part of the Malay Peninsula, with one end at the mouth of the Pak Chan River, on the west coast, and the other in Siamese territory in the neighbourhood of Chumporn, on the east coast, in the hope of shortening materially the voyage from Europe to Hong Kong and China. (Those were still the days of sailing ships.) But the execution of any such scheme is impracticable on commercial grounds, for the cost of construction would be unduly high and the expenses of maintenance exorbitant; the constant tendency to silting up at both extremities would necessitate continual dredging operations of great magnitude. The heavy outlay thus incurred could only lead to canal dues so excessive as to counterbalance for steam or motor vessels any slight saving of time effected by using this route instead of the less direct one via Singapore. From the military point of view a Kra Canal would not threaten British interests so long as Britain retained control of Burma, for the right bank of the estuary of the Pak Chan River is in Burmese territory, whence guns could command effectually the western entrance. The Japanese must be aware of all this and they could have nothing to gain by intriguing with the Siamese upon this question. Yet some time ago a statement appeared in the Press to the effect that thousands of coolies were engaged under Japanese superintendence in digging a canal across the Isthmus. This *canard* was exposed by a journalist who visited the scene and who discovered a number of labourers employed, not under Japanese supervision, in making a highway which was to form part of the Siamese Government's programme of road construction in the Southern Provinces!

CHAPTER XIII

SIAM AND CHINA

ALTHOUGH Britain, France and, later, Japan, are the three principal countries with which the foreign policy of Siam has had to concern itself in modern times, there is a fourth Power, China, of great importance to her from the economic and racial points of view. Her relations with China have been much misunderstood and misrepresented in recent years.

Trade and intercourse between Siam and China date from the earliest days and there have been Chinese residing in Siam for many centuries. At one time, in the era of Sukhothai and in the early Ayuthia period, Siam even acknowledged in a vague and indeterminate manner the suzerainty of China, and King Ram Khamhaeng of Sukhothai is said to have proceeded to that country in order to pay his respects to the Emperor in person. In those remote times, however, neither the size of the Chinese population in Siam nor the degree of influence which it exercised were sufficient to create anything in the nature of a serious problem for the native inhabitants. It is otherwise to-day, owing to the introduction of many thousands of immigrants from China and to the hold which they have acquired over the commerce and industry of the country. This great increase in the number of Chinese immigrants, which is a relatively new thing, has been caused by the pressure of population and by political disturbances in the South of China, and has been facilitated by the improved methods of travel now in use. The result is that, out of a total population of some fifteen million souls, approximately three millions are of Chinese extraction. Of these about half a million have been born in Chinese territory, whilst the balance of two and a half millions or so consists of persons born in Siam who are the offspring of settlers hailing from China. Between them these two categories constitute about a fifth of the entire population and, by reason of their industrious habits and their natural aptitude for business, they have gradually succeeded in getting into their hands the bulk of the country's foreign trade, as well as the lion's share of its internal trade into the bargain. The Siamese, handicapped by their more easy-

going temperament and by the disinclination for commercial pursuits which they have shown in the past, thus find themselves confronted with a problem of the first magnitude if they wish (as they now do wish) to become, economically speaking, masters in their own house. To this economic difficulty are added two others, which have to do, respectively, with the way of living pursued by Chinese residents overseas and by the support which is extended to them nowadays by the Government in China.

When I first went to Siam in 1904, the Chinese question, though it was already attracting notice, was not a very urgent one, chiefly because in those days the Chinese immigrant usually took to himself a wife from among the women of the country. Children of mixed race born of such unions were brought up as Siamese, regarding Siam as their home and merging themselves readily with the population around them. This sort of person, known in Siamese as a "luk chin" (i.e. "child of a Chinese"), proved as a rule energetic and capable beyond the average, became a very useful member of the general community and caused little or no anxiety to the Siamese Government. But the situation changed radically after the rise to power in China of Dr. Sun Yat Sen and the Kuo Min Tang Party, accompanied as it was by an assiduous cult of Chinese nationalism. The new Government then established in China occupied itself much more closely than the old *régime* had done with the question of the Chinese communities overseas, whose numbers and wealth made of them a factor of no small importance to the motherland. Propaganda among these communities was conducted actively in the newly acquired spirit of intense nationalism, and the repercussions were not long in making themselves evident in Siam.

Chinese immigrants now began to bring with them, or to send for, wives from China, and they came to look upon their sons and daughters as being exclusively Chinese nationals for whom an upbringing was required on Chinese, and not Siamese, lines. The day of the "luk chin", of the Sino-Siamese of mixed blood, thus passed away and the members of the Chinese community, who even when left to themselves had always shown a tendency to lead a separate life of their own, now carried this tendency still further and made no attempt to assimilate themselves to the people of the country of their adoption. Thus

they set up their own Chambers of Commerce, their own special organisations of other kinds and, most significant of all, their own schools in which their offspring everywhere received a specifically Chinese education imparted through the medium of the Chinese language. In this way the children of immigrants from China, notwithstanding that they themselves might have been born in Siam and intended to make their permanent home there, were taught to look to China as their true native land, and this orientation was strengthened by the Chinese law of nationality, which provided that all persons of Chinese race, wherever born or residing, were Chinese subjects and as such were entitled to the support and protection of the Government of China.

Here, obviously, was a new situation fraught with the gravest danger from the Siamese national point of view, for no less than a fifth of the total population of the country was made up of persons of an alien race who were being taught to regard themselves as the subjects of an alien Power notwithstanding that the great majority of them had been born in Siam. These people, by their insistence on segregating themselves and leading a separate corporate life on their own account, were in a fair way to establishing that most intolerable of things to any self-respecting Government, an *imperium in imperio*. The situation was made all the more disquieting by the circumstance that the Chinese enjoyed an overwhelming preponderance in the commercial life of the country.

The full realisation of this state of affairs came to the Siamese at a time when, as one of the consequences of the *coup d'état*, a spirit of enhanced nationalism had been aroused in their own bosoms which was no less ardent than that inspiring their Chinese neighbours. The conflict thus resolved itself into a clash of ideals in which the merits of the case were undoubtedly on the side of the Siamese, who were entitled to argue that, after all, it was the independence and integrity of their own native land, and not of China, which were at stake.

It will be appropriate if I anticipate here by describing how the men who were responsible for the *coup d'état* tackled the problem thus confronting them. They approached it from four angles, that is to say, they set about solving it from the points of view of Chinese immigration, of the nationality of Chinese who had been born and were residing in Siam, of the curriculum to

be followed in Chinese schools and of participation by the Chinese in trade and commerce. With respect to immigration, they sought to arrest the constant influx of new arrivals from China (mostly belonging to the coolie type) by raising the tax payable on admission to the country to a figure so high as to make it prohibitive in the case of would-be immigrants of the labouring class. On the point of nationality, the Siamese insisted upon the exclusive enforcement of their own law which, unlike that of China, was based upon the *jus loci* and not upon the *jus sanguinis*, and which laid it down that all persons of whatever racial extraction who had been born in Siamese territory were *ipso facto* nationals of Siam. As regards the schools, a law was passed enacting that in all educational establishments throughout the Kingdom the instruction imparted should be on predominantly Siamese lines, that it should be conveyed through the medium of the Siamese language and that no more than a limited number of hours should be allotted to the teaching of a foreign tongue. With respect to trade and commerce, the new *régime* embarked upon a policy of economic nationalism as one of the chief planks in its programme of reforms and it sought to give effect to that policy in two ways. In the first place, the practice of certain occupations was restricted to Siamese subjects and, in the second place, the Government took the still more effective step of creating various semi-official trading organisations on its own account, in order to compete in the bigger lines of business with foreign merchants, including, of course, the Chinese.

The adoption of these measures aroused strenuous protests in Chinese circles, but on every point the Siamese were able to return a perfectly good reply. Any independent Government, they said, was entitled to levy such immigration fees as it chose, and they reminded the Chinese that the new tax was imposed impartially upon all foreigners alike without racial or national discrimination of any kind. So also with the question of nationality, where the Siamese were able to quote international usage and precedent in support of the stand which they had taken. As for the Chinese schools, the Siamese contended that it was their plain duty to see to it that the many thousands of children born in Siam of Chinese parents and having their permanent place of residence there should be brought up as good Siamese citizens and not as citizens of any foreign State ; they went on to say that, if a Chinese father was not satisfied with a Siamese education for

his children, he was at liberty to send them to school in China, where they could be brought up on definitely Chinese principles ; finally, the Siamese pointed out that here again there was no question of discrimination, for their law affecting schools applied to all educational institutions in the Kingdom, not excepting those established by the Christian missionaries from France, the U.S.A. or Great Britain. On the policy of economic nationalism, the Siamese were able to argue that a precisely similar patriotic movement had been set on foot in China, that all foreign commercial undertakings were necessarily affected adversely in any country by the preferment of national, as opposed to alien, business interests, and that in this respect other foreign merchants in Siam (those of British nationality in particular) stood to suffer equally with the Chinese.

Regrettable though these differences of opinion between Siamese and Chinese may have been, the simple truth is that the latter are the victims of their own virtues. From the economic standpoint—as merchants and business men—they are so markedly superior to the majority of the native populations of South-Eastern Asia that their presence in great numbers in countries like Siam cannot fail to operate to the disadvantage of the indigenous inhabitants. The necessity for restricting Chinese immigration in the first instance, and for controlling the activities of immigrants after their arrival, constitutes a problem by no means peculiar to Siam, as those can testify who are familiar with conditions in other territories in the same part of the world.

The bitterness caused among Chinese, both in Siam and at Chungking, by these measures was exploited by Japan in her endeavours to persuade the Siamese that their interests were identical with her own. But here, as in the case of the irredentist feeling against France, it should be understood that these troubles were not instigated by the Japanese, however willing they may have been to make use of them for their own ends. The underlying causes of them had nothing to do with Japan and had existed before that country had embarked upon her wholesale policy of expansion in Asia. Nevertheless, Siam's strained relations with the Chinese in the period immediately preceding the outbreak of the Far Eastern war were a factor which tended to weight the scales in Japan's favour.

It has been alleged against the Siamese that what they were

doing at this time amounted to a persecution of the Chinese community. To that view I am unable to subscribe and I consider such an accusation as being altogether too sweeping. Individual acts of harshness against Chinese on the part of the authorities there may have been, and the Siamese Government may have gone too far sometimes in the application of the self-protective measures which it felt obliged to adopt, but I myself know of nothing which would justify the use of so strong a word as persecution. It is true that a certain hostile feeling came to be displayed towards the Chinese by the more extreme Siamese nationalists, who were greatly exercised by their belated discovery of the fact, revealed to them in one of the annual reports of the Financial Adviser, that the hold which the Chinese had acquired over the trade of the Kingdom had for one of its consequences the remission to China regularly of profits representing a substantial proportion of the national income. But there has never been any feeling against the Chinese on the part of the Siamese public at large ; it could not very well be otherwise, since there have been Chinese in Siam for so many generations that there is scarcely a family in the country which has not some Chinese blood flowing in its veins to-day. It is to be remembered, moreover, that the great majority of Chinese residing in Siam, having been born locally, are looked upon as Siamese subjects by the Government and are entitled to the full enjoyment of national rights and privileges as such.

Siam has never entered into a Treaty with China, chiefly, no doubt, for the reason that in the past the need for one was not particularly felt. Latterly, however, and even before the *coup d'état*, the Chinese Government had been pressing for the conclusion of an agreement which would confer on each party to it the right, among other things, to appoint diplomatic and consular officers to reside in the territory of the other. The Siamese have steadily declined to entertain this suggestion on the ground that, in the event of Chinese diplomats and consuls being stationed in Siam, a very delicate situation would arise if those functionaries attempted to exercise the right of protection *vis-à-vis* the Siamese authorities over all of the three millions of Chinese residents, irrespective of whether they had been born locally or not. The position taken up by the Siamese is that, before agreeing to a Treaty, they are obliged to ask the Chinese Government to renounce specifically any claim to the

protection of persons of Chinese race who were born in Siam and are actually residing there. No such assurance has ever been furnished and matters have consequently been always at a deadlock.

I see no reason why Siam and China should not get on quite well together in future, provided that the Chinese will extend to Siamese national rights and susceptibilities the same degree of recognition which they are so insistently and so understandably demanding for their own.

SECTION IV

THE PRESENT-DAY SIAM

CHAPTER XIV

THE REVOLUTION OF 24TH JUNE, 1932

It was not until 1932 that Siam reacted at all fully to the new spirit behind the "awakening of Asia" which had been observable in India and the Far East, more especially since the establishment of a republican *régime* in China. Only then were the first open repercussions of this movement, which had been more or less confined to agitation in favour of a revision of the "unequal Treaties", succeeded by others which made themselves felt in different ways and more particularly in the sphere of internal politics.

By that time King Prajadhipok was upon the Throne and had been reigning for seven years. He had come into an evil heritage, since his brother's extravagance had made bankrupt the Privy Purse and had led to the amassing of debts the satisfaction of which fell in part upon the national exchequer. Nor was this all, for he had to face not long afterwards the effects in Siam of that wave of economic depression which, in 1929 and subsequent years, swept over the whole world, not excepting the Far East. In consequence of this depression it was necessary to cut down Government expenses in every way and, among other things, to proceed to a wholesale reduction of official salaries. Widespread dissatisfaction was caused thereby, more especially among the officers of the Armed Forces. The situation plainly required firm handling and King Prajadhipok, absolute sovereign though he then was, did not, unfortunately, show himself capable of providing it. If King Rama VI by his wilful ways had estranged most of the leading members of the Royal Family, his successor went to the opposite extreme and allowed himself to fall under their reactionary influence. At the very outset of his reign he consented to a departure from the prudent policy of his two immediate predecessors in permitting commoners to share with the Royal Family a good proportion of the high

offices of State. Under King Prajadhipok these offices came to be, perhaps more than ever before, a monopoly of the princely caste, and the great resentment created thereby amongst the educated class was not only a contributory factor to what occurred subsequently, but had the further regrettable effect of making the Royal House very unpopular. To the factors just mentioned was added a growing discontent among the Siamese intellectuals upon more idealistic grounds. It had become clear to most of them that government by an absolute monarch was a thing undesirable in itself, representing nowadays an anachronism in any country which aspired to being progressive.

Here altogether was a collection of very explosive material, bound to produce an upheaval sooner or later if suitable steps were not taken to prevent it. Nevertheless, strange as it may sound, King Prajadhipok himself appears to have been the only personage in high authority who was conscious both of this ever-present danger and of the only way in which it could be met. He could not be held accountable for the unhappy effects of the economic depression, which his Government was meeting in the only possible manner. But it was in his power to provide a safety-valve for the pent-up feelings of the most intelligent among his people by allowing to them that share in the administration which they had come to recognise as their right and which some of them were already demanding—not openly, for they dared not go as far as that, but covertly and in secret conclave. There was a plot of which the King had, doubtless, no exact knowledge, but he did apprehend in a general way the menace which was hanging over him, and at one time, in order to counter it, he actually thought of granting to his subjects a Constitution upon his own initiative. Yet I had it from the King's lips that he was dissuaded from doing so by his uncles and brothers, who could not bring themselves to believe that there was anything untoward in the air. Inevitably, therefore, the explosion happened, and it took the form of a successful *coup d'état* staged at Bangkok on 24th June, 1932, by a band of conspirators composed of young intellectuals and of a number of officers belonging to the Army and Navy. The time-honoured system of Government by an absolute monarchy was suppressed and King Prajadhipok was compelled to yield under pressure that Constitution which he had previously wished to confer upon the nation as a free gift.

The story of what took place on the eve of the *coup d'état*, as related to me by persons having first-hand knowledge of it, is astonishing. The Chief of the Bangkok Police was aware of the plot and knew who were its principal instigators. The night before the rising he visited a certain high-ranking Prince in a position of great authority, informed him of what was afoot and begged for permission to arrest the leading conspirators. This permission was refused, the Prince in question declining to believe the report thus furnished to him and remarking that he had heard such tales before and that all of them had proved to be unfounded. So in the event there was no interference with the conspirators, who accomplished their purpose swiftly, seizing possession of the city with the help of the disaffected elements among the military, arresting the leading Princes in their own palaces and subjecting them to the unheard-of indignity of detention for a time under guard. No violence was offered to the person of the King, who was absent from the capital at the time.

The Constitution promulgated after the *coup d'état* curtailed drastically the powers of the sovereign and provided, *inter alia*, for government through a Cabinet and for the creation of a single-chamber Legislature, under the name of the Assembly of the People's Representatives, one half of whose members were to be elected by popular suffrage and the other half were to be appointed in theory by the Crown but in effect by the Government of the day. The person chosen for the position of Siam's first Prime Minister was Phya Manopakorn, a lawyer trained in England who had previously been Chief Judge of the Court of Appeal, but who was not himself one of the band of some eighty or ninety conspirators who had organised the *coup d'état*, and who came to be known to themselves and to the general public as the "promoters". It was Phya Manopakorn who drafted the Constitution in the form which it finally assumed, but, apprehensive of what he deemed to be the too radical tendencies of some of his colleagues in the Cabinet and of certain of the members of the People's Assembly, he suspended it later on in April, 1933. In the following month of June, however, he was expelled from the country by the "promoters", who restored the Constitution and who then proceeded to take the administration more firmly into their own hands. A new Government was accordingly set up under Colonel Phya Phahol Pholphayuha Sena, one of the leading Army officers who had participated in

the *coup d'état*. In October of the same year a counter-revolution was attempted by General Prince Bovoradej, a cousin of the King and a former Minister of War, but it was suppressed by the Army, the greater part of which stood by the new *régime* under the immediate command of a young Colonel named Luang Pibul Songgram, one of the "promoters", who then first came into prominence and who was destined to play not very long afterwards a highly unfortunate *rôle* as the national leader. He now made a name for himself, and he served for a considerable period as Minister of Defence in successive Cabinets under Phya Phahol.

After the counter-revolution attempted by Prince Bovoradej things did not go too well between King Prajadhipok and his constitutional Ministers, who suspected His Majesty of complicity in it, whilst the King on his side felt that the Government was not according to him and to his prerogatives the consideration which was due. His Majesty, who was afflicted with cataract, was not sorry, therefore, to take the advice of his doctors and to proceed to England for the purpose of being treated there by an eye-specialist. Accompanied by the Queen, he accordingly left Siam in January 1934, never, as it proved in the event, to return. In his absence Prince Narisra, the oldest of the high-ranking Princes still remaining in the country, was appointed to act as Regent.

This will be a convenient place in which to record that, in March, 1935, relations between King Prajadhipok, who was still in England, and the Government had become so strained that he decided to abdicate. As he was without children, he was succeeded by his nephew, Prince Ananda Mahidol, then a boy of no more than ten who had been sent for his education to Switzerland, where he has remained ever since except for a very brief visit to Siam at the end of 1938. On the abdication of King Prajadhipok the Government was anxious that Prince Narisra should continue to discharge the duties of Regent, but His Royal Highness deemed it preferable to retire from public office. A Council of Regency with three members was then formed, with Prince Anuvatana, a nephew of King Chulalongkorn, as President. In the following August this Prince committed suicide and was succeeded as President by Prince Aditya Dib-abha.

Two noteworthy features of the revolution effected at Bangkok in June, 1932, were its suddenness, for it was achieved literally

overnight, and the fact that it was not attended by the shedding of blood. It was the product of the democratic leaven then working everywhere throughout the Far East, assisted by the other factors of a more local nature already described.

It was not until the latter half of 1934 that I returned to Siam in the capacity of His Majesty's Minister after an absence of some years. When I arrived at Bangkok I found that a new heaven and a new earth, in the political sense, had been created for the country. The old conditions, familiar to myself and to my predecessors in office, had been swept almost completely away. The monarch, who used to be the central sun of his Kingdom, had been shorn of most of his prerogatives, a Cabinet and a Legislature had been installed, formed in accordance with modern democratic practice, and a new governing class had come into existence composed of a small body of "promoters", who exercised all effective control, and of their friends and supporters. The members of the Royal Family, who used to wield such influence, now counted for little or nothing; some of them had preferred to depart from the country, whilst others were hiding their diminished heads in obscurity at home, and so great was the feeling against them that a clause in the new Constitution expressly precluded Royal Princes from holding any political office.

CHAPTER XV

THE RISE AND DECLINE OF CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT IN SIAM

PHYA PHAHOL continued to be Prime Minister from June, 1933, until December, 1938, when he resigned and was succeeded by Luang Pibul Songgram, by that time the acknowledged leader of the military party, who continued to hold the position of head of the Government for nearly six years. The period of five and a half years during which Phya Phahol was Premier was a constructive one from the political and administrative points of view, and for the greater part of it the constitutional *régime* may fairly be held to have justified itself. As will appear, this was no longer so after the office of Prime Minister had passed into the hands of Luang Pibul, under whose auspices the Government came gradually to wear no more than the outward semblance of constitutionalism and degenerated in the end into nothing short of a military dictatorship.

During the first of the two phases indicated above, namely, the genuinely constitutional phase under Phya Phahol, Siam might claim with reason to be classed among the democratic countries of the world, albeit the democratic experiment was then only in its initial stage. It was under the sign of popular liberty that the system of absolute monarchy had been abolished, and a Constitution had then been promulgated which was so radical in its character that one of its clauses went so far as to limit the King's prerogative of declaring war to cases in which such an act would not be contrary to the Covenant of the League of Nations, of which Siam was a member. And I may mention, as a further proof of adherence to democratic principles, the fact that the Siamese Government of the time signified its approval of the sanctions declared by the League against Italy on the occasion of her attack upon Abyssinia.

The period during which Phya Phahol remained Premier was marked, so far as domestic affairs were concerned, by a commendable advance in the sphere of popular education, to which more of the public funds were allotted than ever before,

as well as by the institution of a system of local government embodying the creation of municipalities at the larger centres and of something resembling urban district councils elsewhere. Mention should also be made of a reform of the tariff system and of the country's financial system generally, which involved the abolition of the unpopular capitation tax and the imposition of an income tax and of a tax upon business firms. Credit should be given, too, for the promulgation of a new electoral law substituting direct popular suffrage in elections to the People's Assembly for the original method of selection by electoral bodies. The vote was given to women, as well as to men, in elections both to the People's Assembly and to the local Councils.* The tariff, financial and electoral reforms were actually put into force soon after the installation of Luang Pibul's first Government, but they were conceived in the spirit of the liberal ideals which characterised the years during which Phya Phahol was Prime Minister and they had their roots in the urge towards democracy which had been responsible for the *coup d'état*. The revision of the tariffs was made possible by the greatest of all the successes achieved under Phya Phahol, for, as has already been narrated, his Government had been able to set the crown upon years of endeavour, begun in the previous days of the absolute monarchy, to get rid of Siam's unequal Treaties. When the old Treaties were replaced by fresh agreements in 1937 and 1938 the portfolio of Foreign Affairs was in the hands of Luang Pradist Manudharn, a young Siamese lawyer trained in France who was at the head of the group of intellectuals who first inspired the *coup d'état*. He will go down in Siamese history as the leader of the liberal faction among the "promoters" of the revolution and, consequently, as the chief political rival of Luang Pibul.

These were praiseworthy achievements which went far to justify the *coup d'état* and the constitutional régime inaugurated by it. Not that that régime was ever democratic in the full sense of the word, for from the very outset, and even with the liberal "promoters", there was no question of conferring immediately upon the Siamese people, untutored and ill-prepared as they were, that complete measure of control over the administration

* It may be a matter of opinion whether the people were yet ready for universal suffrage, but the conceding of it to them is at least a proof of the good intentions of the reformers.

of the country which is exercised by the general electorate in such mature democracies as Britain or the United States. There could, upon the merits, be no thought of taking such a precipitate and ill-advised step, and it was a wise provision in the Constitution which laid it down that, for a period of ten years, or until such time short of that period as more than one-half of the electorate should have acquired a primary education or its equivalent, no more than 50 per cent. of the members of the People's Assembly should be chosen by popular vote, the remaining deputies being appointed by the Crown acting on the advice of the Cabinet. This meant that the Government, with the help of the nominated members, could count upon a majority in the Legislature upon all questions of the first importance and, since the Government, in the earlier stages of the constitutional experiment, could not itself carry on without the support of the general body of "promoters", it followed that the latter controlled the Administration in the last resort.

This position of affairs was quite defensible throughout the transitory period envisaged by the Constitution, for it was only logical that the chief responsibility for the government of the country should lie with those who had taken it upon themselves in the first instance to establish the new *régime* and who had accordingly made themselves answerable to their compatriots. And still other restrictions of the popular liberty, besides the limitation affecting the composition of the Legislature, were not unjustifiably imposed by the men who had lately succeeded to power. For example, there was from the first a rigorous censorship of the Press. Anyone familiar with the newspapers of Siam in their present undeveloped stage, and with the excesses to which so many Siamese journalists are capable of lending themselves, will admit readily that an adequate measure of Press control was highly desirable. So, too, with the right, which is for the present withheld, to found political parties. The *coup d'état* had been engineered successfully by the "promoters" through the agency of an organisation founded by them under the name of the "People's Party"; but when, after a while, certain members of the Legislature asked to be allowed to establish other parties on their own account, permission was refused to them by the Government, which, in order to demonstrate its sense of logic, thereupon dissolved the People's Party as such and allowed it to continue in existence exclusively as a social club. Here

again, although the toleration of rival political parties may rightly be judged as being of the essence of true democracy, it cannot be denied that, in the early stages of the new *régime*, their formation would have been likely to cause unrest and confusion and so to work more harm than good. The advent of democratic government in Burma was cursed with a plethora of political parties and Siam has done well to steer clear of such a possibility herself hitherto.

Yet, although the *régime* set up in 1932 was thus in some respects democratic in no more than name, it marked, nevertheless, a great advance in the direction of popular government as compared with the previous system of absolute rule. The elected members of the Assembly were able to call public attention to the requirements or grievances of their constituents and, although the Government could in case of need always command a majority in the Chamber, the fact remains that through the elected deputies the people at least had a share in the enactment of legislation. If to these considerations be added the progress made in other directions, it must be acknowledged that, prior to the virtual suppression of constitutional administration by Luang Pibul and the military party, the "promoters" had made a good beginning with the establishment of government on democratic lines. Even more significant was the promise they held out of further progress along the same road, and a tribute must be paid to them for having had the wisdom to go slowly with an experiment which they would have been sure to wreck if they had proceeded too fast. Too sudden and too deep a draught of the strong wine of democracy must have gone to the head of the ordinary Siamese if it had been administered to him.

The "die-hards" in Siam adduce, as a proof of the unwillingness of the "promoters" to loosen their hold upon the governmental machine, the circumstance that, when the end of the period of ten years stipulated in the Constitution was approaching, the People's Assembly was induced to pass an amendment postponing for a further period of the same duration the creation of a Legislature entirely elected by popular vote. In justice to all concerned with this step, however, it should be borne in mind that, at the time when it was taken, war had already broken out in Europe and the future course of events in the Far East was threatening and obscure. The moment was clearly not propitious for such a sweeping change as the

Constitution had foreshadowed ; its postponement, if viewed in that light, will appear as no more than a measure of precaution dictated by prudence, though the delay might, perhaps, with advantage have been limited provisionally to a period of not longer than five years.

The years of government under the leadership of Phya Phahol were not unaccompanied by trouble, for there were adherents of the old *régime* who plotted against the new one. Some did not shrink from organising attempts upon the lives of certain of the "promoters". But all of these conspiracies were unearthed and frustrated. Moreover, a number of minor political crises occurred which led to the resignation of the Cabinet on, I think, four occasions ; but each time a new Cabinet was formed under Phya Phahol with practically the same members as before, the resignations generally proving a convenient method of dropping one or two undesirable holders of ministerial portfolios by the simple process of leaving them out when the Government was reconstituted. Notwithstanding such plots and crises, however, the period of administration under Phya Phahol was upon the whole one of constructive and progressive work.

Nevertheless, already in the days of Phya Phahol's leadership signs were not lacking that there was a cleavage in the ranks of the "promoters" themselves. This had become evident as early as at the time of the suspension by Phya Manopakorn of the Constitution in April, 1933, for one of his chief supporters had been Colonel Phya Song Suradej, who was himself a leading "promoter" and had been associated with Phya Phahol in staging the *coup d'état*. Phya Song Suradej refused consistently to accept office under either Phya Phahol or Luang Pibul ; he continued for long to be a thorn in the side of the Government and was accused of working for the return to the Throne of King Prajadhipok after that monarch's abdication. He was finally banished and repaired to Saigon, his disappearance from the scene, in conjunction with the retirement of Phya Phahol, having the important result of leaving Luang Pibul in undisputed possession of the field as head of the military party.

Although a few others among the "promoters" sided with Phya Song Suradej, this break-away, however, did not denote any general line of cleavage among the organisers of the *coup d'état*. What was more serious was the rift which opened in

course of time, and which speedily widened, between the intellectuals, that is to say, the liberal half of the "promoters" grouped round Luang Pradist, and the other half of them, consisting of the military element and comprising officers belonging both to the Army and to the Navy, who acknowledged Luang Pibul as their leader. Even during Phya Phahol's tenure of office it was becoming apparent that the military were bent upon getting most of the power into their hands. From the first they had insisted upon a larger share of the national revenue being devoted to purposes of defence, but this was not enough and, as time went on, they set about securing the appointment of their own men to numerous important civilian posts, such as governorships in the provinces. It was only the moderating influence of Phya Phahol which succeeded in keeping the balance between the two opposing camps. He was himself no military fanatic and, whilst respected by the soldiers as one of themselves, he was on friendly terms with Luang Pradist and the liberals, so that both factions were willing to rally around him. But things reached such a pass towards the end that he came to figure as the chief, not so much of a united Administration, as was the case in the early days following upon the *coup d'état*, as of a coalition Government consisting of two rival parties between which his own personality constituted the only binding link. Finally, his health began to fail, he grew weary of trying to keep his restive team together and he talked frequently of resignation. The dismayed liberals foresaw clearly that they would be swamped once Phya Phahol had left the scene and once the military party, controlling as they did the Armed Forces of the country, were restrained no longer by his authority and were free to do what they pleased. When Phya Phahol did actually retire from public life, at the end of the year 1938, with the honorific title of "The Elder Statesman", a fresh Government was formed with Luang Pibul at the head of it and, after a brief period of no more than six years, the constitutional experiment in Siam may then already be regarded as having failed.

Although Luang Pibul, after his accession to office as Prime Minister, more than once tendered his resignation, this was done on each occasion (as with Phya Phahol before him) only for the purpose of reconstituting the Government under his own leadership and with the same composition as previously, except for the dropping of one or two undesirable Ministers. In practice,

he is to be considered as having occupied the position of Prime Minister without interruption and with an ever-increasing assumption into his own hands of effective power, not merely on behalf of the military party but, to a still greater extent, of himself personally as well. He was too adroit, however, to shock the public at first by any very abrupt changes, and the liberal elements were not excluded from his Cabinets. In particular, after the retirement of Phya Phahol he retained the assistance of Luang Pradist, to whom he entrusted the portfolio of Finance, and he was careful to go on paying lip-service to the Constitution and to the Assembly of the People's Representatives. He also promoted to Cabinet rank some of the younger liberals who had not held such high office hitherto, thereby securing their personal allegiance to himself and cutting some of the ground from under the feet of such rivals as Luang Pradist. By this means and by the exercise of patronage in other ways he was able to consolidate his position, without ever having actually to summon to his aid that active intervention of the Armed Forces upon which his authority was, of course, based in the last resort. And so it was that the liberal Ministers, albeit they were permitted to remain in the Cabinet on sufferance, gradually passed into political eclipse, those of them who held portfolios being allowed control over their respective Departments only to a degree which coincided with the views of Luang Pibul. So also with the People's Assembly, the members of which were given clearly to understand that, politically, it was as much as their lives were worth to oppose the Prime Minister upon any issue on which he had set his heart.

In this fashion the Constitution, though never formally suppressed, was gradually converted into a travesty of what it was originally meant to be. Backed by the Army, with the liberals reduced to impotence, Luang Pibul was finally able to throw off the democratic mask altogether after the Japanese overran Siam in December, 1941, and to call himself openly the "leader" of the Siamese people; it was expected that all members of the public, when greeting one another in the ordinary way, should make use of the words "Hail Pibul", and it is even reported that his picture was thrown upon the screen at cinema performances, when the audience was supposed to rise and bow to it. The analogy with the European dictators Hitler and Mussolini thus became complete and the democratic experiment

was shown more than ever to have been an ignominious failure. The system of absolute government had been overthrown in 1932, only to be replaced after the wheel had turned full circle by another form of autocracy, with the important difference, however, that the military dictatorship of Luang Pibul lacked both the historical background and the hereditary tradition by which, under the old *régime*, the rule of the absolute monarchs could to some extent be justified up to the very end. The young King Ananda Mahidol, who had meanwhile succeeded to the Crown, was at this time absent from the realm and at school in Switzerland. Although he had returned with his mother to Siam at the end of 1938, he went back to Europe again in January of the following year after no more than a brief visit, and thereafter no thought of the Royal position and prerogatives seems to have restrained Luang Pibul from pursuing to the end his journey along the road to dictatorship. King Ananda Mahidol was not deposed, but he ceased to count for very much, if anything.

When considering the unfortunate collapse of Constitutional Government in Siam it is important to bear two things in mind. One of them is that the war in Europe broke out not long after Luang Pibul's assumption of the office of Prime Minister, and the initial successes of Germany under Hitler went to his head and to the heads of his followers. They became convinced that the most effective form of government was dictatorship, and their admiration of the totalitarian States in the West was enhanced by the example of Japan, which had gone totalitarian also and had entered into an alliance with Germany and Italy. It is a characteristic of the Siamese that they like to be in the fashion, and Luang Pibul proved no exception to this rule. If dictatorships were to be the order of the day, then it suited his book perfectly to develop into a dictator himself!

The second fact which should be borne in mind in connection with the demise of constitutionalism in Siam is that it was never based, either at first or afterwards, upon public opinion. For there is not, and never has been, such a thing as public opinion in that country, where, as I have already explained, the great mass of the people is still too uneducated to take an active interest in political questions. It is to the small middle-class intelligentsia that interest in politics—itsself a thing of modern growth in Siam—is practically confined. In the case of the group of intellectuals

to whom the conspiracy to overthrow the absolute monarchy owed its first origins, it may be assumed that the motive prompting them was a genuine enthusiasm for democracy. But they had been obliged to associate themselves with a section of the military in order to secure the measure of armed support without which, in the absence of a public opinion to back them, they could not hope to achieve their ends, and it is not unfair to conclude, in the light of what happened subsequently, that their military fellow-conspirators were actuated by less idealistic motives than themselves. The military, in fact, were so dissatisfied with the effects upon their class of the general economic depression then prevailing that certain among them were nothing loath to join up with the liberals for the purpose of establishing a new *régime* by which they looked forward to being treated more generously than by the old one. These men did not object to associating themselves with the intellectuals under the common banner of constitutionalism, for in 1932 democracy had not yet become discredited in the eyes of half the world and there was the recent example of republican China to stimulate them. But once the new *régime* had been inaugurated, once the first flush of revolutionary enthusiasm was over, the soldiers and the sailors among the "promoters" began to realise that it was only with their assistance that the *coup d'état* had succeeded in the first place and that, without it, the new form of government would almost certainly suffer speedy extinction at the hands of the supporters of the old *régime*. In fine, the military faction came to understand that, whereas the liberals could not dispense with them, they could themselves, on the other hand, quite well afford to dispense with the liberals. They were masters of the situation, which they proceeded to exploit to the utmost in their own interests, reducing the liberals to impotence but, for the sake of "face", allowing some of them to remain in office and retaining the outward trappings, but not the essential inner core, of the Constitution.

Looking back upon the past, it is now easy for the impartial observer to see that the democratic revolution of June, 1932, lacking as it did the basis of any valid public opinion, was doomed to failure from the very start. The moral to be drawn from what happened afterwards is that in any country where the traditional form of government has been weakened or destroyed, and where there is no effective public opinion to

supplement or replace it, the existence of relatively powerful Armed Forces must represent a standing menace to the growth of democratic institutions. The modern Siamese Army, which is founded on conscription, came into being in the reign of King Chulalongkorn. That sagacious monarch could not foresee that it would one day develop into an instrument for establishing the rule of a military dictator and so prove, from the point of view of Siamese conservatives and liberals alike, a curse rather than a blessing to the land.

CHAPTER XVI

CHANGED CONDITIONS IN THE NEW SIAM

ALTHOUGH Britain and France were traditionally democratic Powers and although the *coup d'état* of 1932 was staged under the sign of democracy, there was one aspect of the altered situation created in that year which was favourable to neither of those two countries. For the new men who had come into power, remembering that the absolute monarchy had entertained consistently good relations with ourselves and also, of late years, with the French, were fearful lest the adherents of King Prajadhipok and of the old *régime* should plead their cause so effectually in London and Paris that Britain and France might conceive it to be in their interests to restore by force the former system of government and to eject the "promoters" of the *coup d'état* from their freshly acquired positions of authority, on the ground that they were a danger to the peace and security of South-Eastern Asia. What made matters worse from our point of view was that it was precisely at this time that Japan was beginning to disclose her forward policy in the Far East and to proclaim her resolve to set up a "New Order" under her own auspices. She was in consequence trying to increase her influence in Siam and she was only too glad to fish in the troubled waters of the post-revolutionary phase by exploiting the distrust harboured by the supporters of the new *régime* as to the intentions of Britain and France. For this purpose she was posing virtuously as the friend of the constitutional party, in contrast with the reactionary British and French, who were presumed to be associated with the old gang and to view the new men with suspicion and dislike.

The result was that, when I was appointed His Majesty's Minister at Bangkok in 1934, British and French influence had been on the wane since the *coup d'état* and the influence of the Japanese was being augmented proportionately. This being so, when I presented myself at the Foreign Office in London before proceeding to take up my post, it was impressed upon me that I should make it one of my first tasks to remove from the minds of the new rulers of Siam the entirely groundless suspicion that

Britain had any wish to intervene in the field of Siamese domestic politics. I was to bring them to realise that the particular form of government which the Siamese might choose for themselves was regarded by His Majesty's Government as being exclusively their own affair and that the new *régime* had nothing whatever to fear from us but could, on the contrary, rely upon our cordial goodwill, so long as it continued to fulfil its Treaty obligations towards us and to carry on with that policy of good neighbourliness which had characterised Anglo-Siamese relations from the very first. In my humble opinion the event showed that the above instructions were executed successfully. As time went on, my contacts with the various Siamese Ministers of State and with other prominent officials became perfectly easy and friendly, and I can say with confidence that, after the initial period of misunderstanding was over, British relations with the new Siam became as cordial as they had ever been with the old one, and this happy state of affairs continued even after the establishment of a military dictatorship under Luang Pibul. The French, too, were successful in re-establishing relations of confidence between themselves and the Siamese Government, though for them the political horizon was to become clouded again after the collapse of France in 1940.

As a concrete instance of our having been able to remove the suspicions at first entertained against us by the new men I would quote the matter of the despatch of Siamese students for instruction to England. When I assumed my duties as Minister at Bangkok, I found to my regret that a prejudice had sprung up there against a British education. This was in part a consequence of the fear that we might take steps to restore the absolute monarchy, but it was also due in part to the notion that Siamese educated in Britain usually came back to their native land with perfect drawing-room manners and with much skill in the social arts, such as that of dancing, but with very little aptitude or inclination for a serious job of work. I did my best to dispel this illusion and I pointed out to my Siamese friends that, if some of their young men trained in England had not been very successful in after-life, it was because they had not been of the right type in themselves. I suggested that the sons of rich men, to which class so many of the Siamese educated in England had belonged hitherto, were not renowned for being hard workers ; and I expressed my conviction that, if only young people of

the proper kind were sent to us for their training, the results would prove to be all that could be desired. In support of what I was saying I was able to point to some of the most capable and distinguished men in Siamese public life who had been trained in England and whose subsequent careers had vindicated their British education thoroughly. These arguments were not without effect, and the flow of Siamese Government students to Britain, which looked like being stopped at one time, was permitted to continue. My efforts in this direction, and in maintaining British cultural influence in Siam generally, were assisted greatly by the British Council, to which I had represented the difficulties that were besetting me.

I would observe that it became the policy of the new *régime* to discourage the former practice of sending Siamese boys and girls of tender age abroad, first to school and subsequently to a university or other centre of higher training. It was argued that, by the time these students had grown up and had returned to their native country, they had grown *dépaysés* and were no longer true Siamese. It was decided, therefore, that in future all holders of Government scholarships sent to study abroad should be chosen from those already old enough to have graduated from one of the two universities at Bangkok, who, it was supposed, would thus be qualified to embark upon a course of higher training as soon as they arrived in the particular country for which they were destined. I am not sure that this decision was wise. King Rama VI, to take an example, was a perfectly good Siamese and an acknowledged master of his native language, yet he had been sent to England as a boy and did not return to Siam until he was over twenty years of age. And there were many others like him.

Under the new *régime* the practice began of sending young Siamese to study in Japan in steadily increasing numbers. This was not solely due to the enhancement of Japanese influence; another reason for it was to be found in the comparative cheapness of a Japanese education, for not only did it cost more in travelling expenses to despatch a student on the long voyage to Europe or America, but the cost of living and the scale of educational charges there were much higher than was the case in Japan, and the men of the new *régime* were anxious to procure the training abroad of as many students as they could with as little expense to the Government as possible. This same con-

sideration will explain the presence in the years following the *coup d'état* of a numerous body of Siamese students in the Philippine Islands for the purpose of benefiting by a relatively cheap training at Manila. It is to be noted, nevertheless, that the best students, whether in receipt of financial aid from the State or supported by their own families—the class, in short, for which the higher flights of learning were reserved—did not go either to Japan or to Manila, but continued to be sent as before to Europe or to the U.S.A.

In the days of the absolute monarchy in Siam British influence stood to gain by the mere circumstance that it was a monarch, albeit a constitutional one, who was at the head of the British people. This will explain in part the practice of sending so many young Siamese to England for a Western education in the past, for the Siamese Kings, who were the first to encourage the despatch of Siamese youths to Europe for instruction, preferred not unnaturally that their sons and relatives should go to a country like Britain, where also a King was reigning and where the amenities of life at Court were still preserved. Hence it was that both King Rama VI and King Prajadhipok received an English education, and the fashion thus set was followed by many other Siamese parents besides the King. This asset was lost to us after the *coup d'état*, when the King's predilections counted for less than they had ever done before and when the Royal Family had become unpopular with the makers of the new Siam. But any ground which we may have lost with the new *régime* in that way was, I think, made up afterwards by our manifest desire to maintain the friendliest relations with it and, in particular, by the sympathetic manner in which His Majesty's Government met the wish of the Siamese Government to procure a revision of the foreign Treaties upon a basis of complete reciprocity.

The changes wrought by the revolution of 1932, profound though they were, made themselves felt in the internal politics of the country much more than in the field of foreign affairs. Up to the close of 1938, when Phya Phahol ceased to be Prime Minister, the foreign policy of Siam continued to be more or less what it had been before the *coup d'état*, with Britain and France still its two pivotal points but with the sinister figure of Japan already well in the foreground. Developments after that date are, in my view, to be ascribed in no more than minor

degree to the fact that Luang Pibul had set himself up as a dictator. Even after he had become Prime Minister Luang Pibul got on quite well with the French and had sent his daughter to Paris for her education.* If relations between Siam and France subsequently deteriorated under Luang Pibul to the extent of actual warfare on the frontier of Indo-China, that unfortunate development was by no means solely due to the fact that he happened to be in power at the time. It was due most of all to the military collapse of France and to the opportunity afforded thereby for the satisfaction of those irredentist aspirations regarding the "lost provinces" in Cambodia and on the Mekong which had been current long before Luang Pibul's public career had begun. Similarly, if Anglo-Siamese relations at the very end lost abruptly that spirit of cordial friendship which had always characterised them previously and if Siam is at war with us to-day, it was not because Luang Pibul wished to assist in accomplishing the downfall of Britain in the Far East, but rather because he became convinced at last that that downfall was in process of being brought about by Japan and that Siam would do well to associate herself with the victorious party before it was too late.

It is to be admitted that Siam's relations with yet another foreign country, namely, China, deteriorated under the *régime* of Luang Pibul and that here it was the Siamese Government which took the initiative. But the Chinese problem in Siam, as we have seen, was no new one ; like the irredentist feeling against France, it was something which had existed long before Luang Pibul entered upon the stage. In his time, however, the need for its solution had become more urgent than ever and it was in keeping with the ardent nationalist spirit of the new Siam that it should have been tackled as it was.

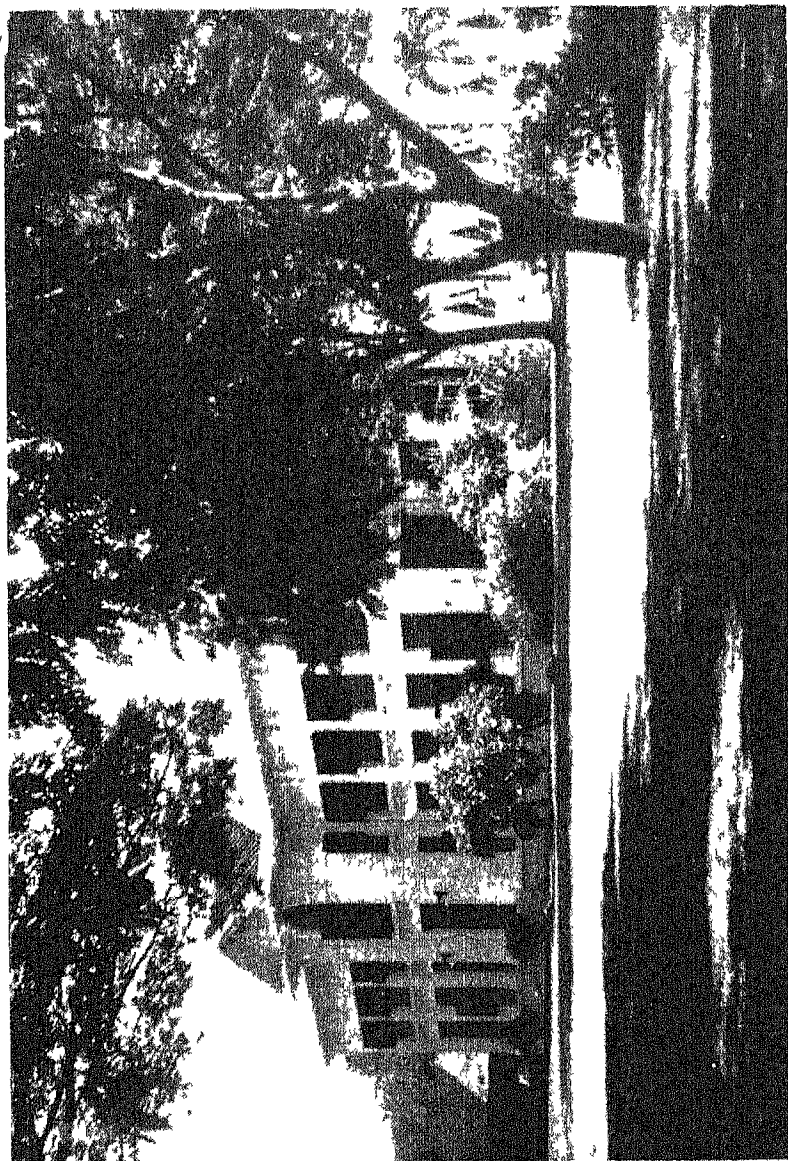
I have just mentioned an ardent nationalist spirit as being one of the characteristics of the men who came into power after the *coup d'état*, and this holds good of the liberal faction no less than of the military party. Here again, the legitimate manifestation of this feeling was no new thing, for there had been plenty of good Siamese nationalists in the old days, though it was only natural that the enthusiasm which prompted the instigators of the revolution should have been accompanied

* He also sent his second son to England for training in the British Navy, whilst his eldest son received a military training in Belgium.



VISI TO BANGKOK OF THE YOUNG KING ANANDA MAHIDOL

His Majesty is seen beneath the royal umbrella. Behind him are his sister (Princess Kalyani) and the President of the Council of Regency (Prince Aditya Dib-abha)



THE MINISTERS' HOUSE AT BANGKOK

by an intensified patriotism and by a more fixed determination to vindicate in all respects the right of Siam to be classed upon equal terms with the sovereign nations of the world. What was distinctive of the new Siam which grew out of the *coup d'état* was that spirit of chauvinism which led her Government not merely to aspire to the possession of territory which might possibly be considered as belonging to her of right, but to seek to extend her frontiers at the expense of her neighbours through the acquisition of country to which she could lay no valid claim. These vainglorious pretensions betrayed themselves more especially under the military dictatorship of Luang Pibul, and it is no more than just to say that the liberal leaders were not associated with them. They were, however, fanned and fostered sedulously by Japanese propaganda.

Not only were the "promoters" one and all of them determined that Siamese should be masters in their own house *vis-à-vis* the other Powers, but they were equally set upon ensuring that the national life should be lived primarily for the advantage of the Siamese people and not in such a way as to benefit unduly any foreign sections of the population. One of the most striking manifestations of the enhanced spirit of nationalism in the legitimate sense has already been noted in the economic sphere. It is among the merits of the "promoters" that under them, for the first time since the comparatively remote days when external trade was a prerogative of the King and could only be conducted under his license and on such terms as he saw fit to impose, a serious effort was made to break the virtual monopoly in the matter of trade and commerce which the unenterprising Siamese had allowed to pass by default into the hands of foreigners.

One of the Government's chief objects here was to arrange for native competition with "big business" in the import and export trade conducted exclusively by alien merchants. The Siamese are not a rich people, there is comparatively little fluid capital in private hands and, if business enterprises of purely Siamese nationality on a large scale were to be set up at all, it was evident that most of the capital for them would have to be provided by the State. Hence the creation of a number of semi-official commercial undertakings founded almost entirely with the help of Government funds, the directors of which were not unnaturally composed to a large extent of highly placed Government officials. The charge has been levelled against

some of these people that they paid too much attention to their own personal interests and that they exercised undue influence, to the prejudice of private commercial interests, when it came to the award of Government contracts, which they were often able to secure by means of unjustifiable manipulations for the particular organisation with which they happened to be connected. A suspicion of this kind is, perhaps, inevitable in the case of any form of semi-official competitive business enterprise, but it is difficult to see how, at the present stage, the creation of such undertakings can be avoided if Siam's new policy of economic nationalism is to be prosecuted successfully. It is another question, however, whether the efforts to create a mercantile class among the Siamese will come to fruition. Up to date the Government seems to have achieved most success in its attempts to control the export trade in rice, but it is significant that the large number of rice-mills which it has bought up have still to be operated by Chinese, and Siamese trading can never be in a healthy condition so long as it has to depend on Government support alone and not also upon some degree of proficiency in commerce among the people themselves. I am acquainted with a few of them who give evidence of that proficiency, but I have found upon enquiry that in all cases they come of Chinese stock !

It goes without saying that the men of the new *régime* continued the policy of relying less upon the counsel of foreign advisers. They were still willing, and even anxious, however, to learn from the West and they were prepared to consult Western experts upon purely technical matters. It is of significance that, after the *coup d'état*, Siamese advisers were appointed to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finance in addition to the foreign advisers (in the one case an American and in the other an Englishman) who were already attached to those Departments.

A word may be said here as to the system of national defence in the new Siam.

Conscription for the Army and Navy has been in force in Siam for something like half a century, so that even before the revolution of 1932 the country had developed a military tradition in the continental European sense such as has never been created with ourselves or in the United States. Whilst the obligation to perform military service is universal, all of those liable to it are not called up in practice. The Siamese Air Force, though dating from before the revolution, is of recent

formation and, although small, has been regarded by expert observers as the most efficient of the three Fighting Services. It is one of the achievements of the men who came into power in 1932 that they made of the Navy, which before then had come to consist of a few obsolete and almost worthless ships, a modern force, albeit a very small one, by arranging for the construction of a number of torpedo-boats in Italy, as well as of one or two larger vessels and some submarines in Japan. The Army establishment, too, which is much the largest of all, has benefited by the increased attention paid to it since the *coup d'état*, and extensive orders for material required for its needs have been placed abroad, some in Europe and others in Japan. By the end of 1941 I suppose that the Siamese Government could have put something like 100,000 men into the field, but only a portion of these would have been properly equipped. After the advent to power of Luang Pibul the budget of the Ministry of Defence became so swollen that in the end it consumed approximately a third of the national income.

It was, doubtless, to be foreseen that the requirements of defence would be placed in the foreground by an Administration under the control of the military, despite the circumstance that the purchase at great expense of armaments from foreign countries was bound to result in a heavy drain upon the financial resources of the Kingdom, for Siam is unable to manufacture herself more than a fraction of what her Army, Navy and Air Force require in the shape of material of war. But, however that may be, the period from 1939 to 1941, throughout which Luang Pibul held the reigns of government, proved to be years of either actual warfare or of frenzied preparation for it in almost every country of the world; so the military faction was able to point to imposing precedents for the very heavy expenditure which was being incurred in respect of the Siamese defence establishment. It is true that there were not wanting those who felt that the maintenance of such comparatively large forces by a Power so small as Siam entailed expenditure out of all proportion to their possible utility in the event of a major conflict in the Far East. But at the time these people were voices crying in the wilderness, and the great majority of the Siamese public allowed itself to be swept along by the tide of almost universal preparation for war.

PERSONALITIES IN THE NEW SIAM

WE are now approaching a second milestone in the history of the new Siam. The first was reached at the close of 1938, when Luang Pibul and his followers began the process of replacing genuine Constitutional Government by a virtual dictatorship, whilst the second milestone marked the country's entry on the dolorous road of subjection to Japan. Before dealing more specifically with the oncoming of the latter phase and before discussing that tendency to chauvinism of Luang Pibul's party which helped the Japanese, to a limited extent, to undermine the British position, it will be appropriate to pause at this point and to furnish some observations upon certain of the more prominent figures in post-revolutionary Siam. As in other instances, this will entail at times the anticipation of events which have still to be narrated.

The brief reign of King Prajadhipok, whose relations with the new *régime* I have already described, was nothing less than a tragedy. His health had always been feeble and, born as he was the youngest of five brothers, he had not thought that he would succeed to the Throne. Yet he was summoned to rule over the Siamese people in circumstances of well-nigh unprecedented difficulty, and Siam is still suffering from the fatal mistake which he committed in withholding from his subjects the timely gift of a Constitution. If only he had obeyed the dictates of his own superior instinct and judgment in that matter, instead of yielding to the short-sighted counsels of his relatives, how different the subsequent history of his country might have been! The *coup d'état* could have been forestalled, democratic institutions could have been introduced without any abrupt break with the traditions of the past, and there need have been no military dictatorship to substitute itself for the less odious and more justifiable autocracy of the monarchs of the hereditary Chakri Dynasty. King Prajadhipok could at the same time have recovered his popularity and might have gone down to succeeding generations as one of the great sovereigns of his line. As it was Siam underwent the misfortune, at one of the gravest

crises with which she has ever been faced, of being governed, in the person of this King, by one of the most well-intentioned but least effectual of her rulers. His Majesty inherited to the full the intelligence which has distinguished so many of the members of the Royal House of Chakri. Educated in England, and subsequently in France also, he was familiar with Western ways and was not slow to learn from Western precedents. The pity of it was that his strength of character was not on a level with his quick brain and his lofty ideals. I write these words with every respect for his memory. He had many high qualities, but Fate thrust upon his shoulders a burden too heavy for him to bear. He laid it down of his own free will at the end and died in self-imposed exile from his native land. The last of the absolute and the first of the constitutional monarchs of Siam, he was fortunate in neither *rôle*.

Prince Aditya Dib-abha, who filled until recently the position of President of the Council of Regency in the absence of the sovereign from the Kingdom, received a training in the British Navy and is a graduate of the University of Cambridge. He is a grandson of King Chulalongkorn, and his father, the late Prince of Chumporn, who received a British naval training before him, is regarded as having been the creator of the modern Siamese Navy. Prince Aditya showed considerable suppleness in the discharge of his functions, and not long ago he was raised, at the instance of Luang Pibul, from the rank of "Highness" to that of "Royal Highness". His command of the English language and his acquaintance with our ways of life made him a popular figure with those members of the British community at Bangkok who knew him personally, and I have myself received the fullest measure of kindness and consideration from him. Since his position at the head of the Regency Council was of a purely representative nature and carried with it no political or administrative authority, it would be unfair to attach to him any major degree of responsibility for the decision of the Siamese Government to enter into an alliance with Japan. Some time before the outbreak of war with that country, His Majesty King George VI conferred upon Prince Aditya the honour of a G.C.V.O.

Of Field-Marshal Luang Pibul Songgram, the leader of the new Siam from 1938 onwards, it must be remarked that in his capacity as a statesman he is the perfect opportunist, and to this

I would add that he is prompted by intense personal ambition and that his political record is such that he is trusted by no one. If regard be had to his recent acts and to his responsibility for ranging his country on the side of Japan in the present war, there is every justification for passing this severe judgment upon him—a judgment which will, I am satisfied, be amply confirmed, when the day of reckoning comes, by his compatriots, who will not readily forgive him for having staked the national fortunes on a Japanese victory. I say nothing of his previous usurpation of all authority on behalf of a military dictatorship at the expense of the Constitution which, as one of its original founders, he was in duty bound to uphold. As regards his capacity for statecraft, I consider that he has shown himself to be adroit and supple rather than far-sighted or able in the constructive sense of those words. One of his defects is his variable temperament, which makes him prone to be influenced by the passing fashions of the moment and to lend most weight to the particular adviser who may happen last to have had his ear. In hitching the Siamese waggon to the star of Japan he shut his eyes deliberately to the fact that by so doing he was betraying his country's British and American friends, and that he was placing what he conceived to be the nation's immediate and material advantage before considerations of national honour.

Although time is already showing that in putting his money on the Japanese horse he committed an error of judgment, nevertheless, he is too astute to have been blind to the perilous consequences for Siam of Japan's predominance, and I have never thought him to be pro-Japanese or anti-Western at heart. He underwent a course of training as an artillery officer in France and, as I have had occasion to observe before, it was to Europe that he sent all three of his children for whom he desired a training abroad. His personal charm and the duplicity which he showed in his conduct of public affairs—these are the two things which impressed me most about him. Unavoidably, many of the friends whom he gained by the display of the one quality were lost to him afterwards by the exercise of the other, and I have good reason for thinking that he is held in suspicion even by the Japanese to-day. Having expressed myself thus unfavourably with respect to Luang Pibul, I gladly make a point of paying a compliment to him in his private capacity. I believe him to have a generous disposition in matters which do not stand in the

way of his private ambitions ; he can be very tactful, and my relations with him have been so agreeable that I find it difficult to think of him even now with feelings of personal rancour.

After Luang Pibul the outstanding figure in the new Siam is Luang Pradist Manudharm, the intellectual author of the *coup d'état*, who received as a young man a legal education in France. Soon after the constitutional *régime* had been established, he excited intense opposition and controversy by a manifesto in which he advocated a system of State employment and of State ownership of land bearing a suspicious resemblance to the doctrines of Communism. As a result he was sent into what was virtually banishment abroad by the Government of Phya Manopakorn, only to be recalled once more after the fall of that same Government. Luang Pradist had denied stoutly that he was a Communist ; he called himself an "agrarian socialist", and he was finally cleared of the charge of Communism (the propagation of which in Siam had in the meantime been forbidden by law) through the finding of a special committee appointed to investigate the case against him. Thereafter he became a member of Phya Phahol's Cabinet and, when I went back to Siam in 1934, he was holding the portfolio of the Interior and was preparing the scheme for inaugurating a new system of local government. Subsequently, he became Minister of Foreign Affairs, and remained in that position throughout the critical period when Siam was revising her Treaties with the foreign Powers. Later, when Luang Pibul became the head of the Government, he was transferred to the Ministry of Finance, where he busied himself with reforming the national methods of taxation.

Luang Pradist has all along been the idol of the young Siamese intelligentsia and, extreme though his political views may have been in his salad days, he has modified and moderated them considerably since then. One of his most engaging qualities is, indeed, his willingness to learn from experience, and he has given proof latterly of a capacity for practical statesmanship which, if he is allowed to exercise it, should be of no small benefit to his country in time to come. A consistent democrat, but an upholder of the constitutional monarchy, Luang Pradist is the leader to whom the Siamese liberals are most likely to turn when the moment arrives, after the expulsion of the Japanese, for putting the constitutional *régime* into operation again under the

ægis of the United Nations and for giving it that chance of making good which has hitherto been withheld from it. The democratic experiment will have all the greater chance of success if Luang Pradist and his friends are then willing to associate with themselves in the administration of the country those Siamese who used to be identified with the old *régime*, but who are sensible enough to realise that the Constitution has come to stay and that the future of the nation depends upon its being made to work satisfactorily. Luang Pradist would, I think, not be averse from enlisting the co-operation of these ex-officials, who possess among them a large share of the brains of the country and who have behind them a valuable experience of administrative life.

It is of good augury that Luang Pradist is himself of Chinese extraction, and that he does not entertain the prejudice against the Chinese section of the population which is manifested by some of the more violent nationalists. I regard him as being one of the most sincere, and perhaps the ablest, among the "promoters". If at the outset, before the military had subordinated all other considerations to the rule of force, the *coup d'état* signified, as it did, a revolution based upon ideals, not directed to the exclusive advantage of any particular person or party, then the credit for that achievement, unique in the history of Siam (which has known many revolutions based upon more questionable motives) must be ascribed chiefly to the enthusiasm and to the gift for leadership of Luang Pradist. As a democrat he was bound to be anything but *persona grata* to the Japanese, and it was no matter for surprise that, after they had made themselves masters of Siam, he should have been invited to relinquish the portfolio of Finance and should have been elevated to the limbo of the Council of Regency, as a member of which body he came to occupy a position of honour carefully dissociated from the performance of any political or executive duties. I was on the best of terms with Luang Pradist, and admired him greatly for the consistency with which he stuck to his principles.

Of Phya Phahol Pholphayuha Sena, the "Elder Statesman", who from the military viewpoint may be looked upon as one of the fathers of the *coup d'état*, I can only write in terms of high personal regard. His political gifts may not be of the first order, though he possesses more shrewdness and common sense than some people are inclined to attribute to him; but his simplicity and his kindly nature had endeared him to those connected with

him in such a degree that, as I have already explained, it was his personality which at the end was the sole link binding together the military faction and the liberals in what had developed into a veritable Coalition Government formed by a union of the right and left wings among the "promoters". One of Phya Phahol's chief merits is that, for all his military training and antecedents, his political views are moderate, and he is known to have conceived a warm friendship for Luang Pradist. His retirement into private life for reasons of health was most regrettable, as it was followed automatically by the eclipse of the liberals and by the rise to supreme authority of the soldiers under Luang Pibul. We may surmise, however, that by that time the position of Phya Phahol had become impossible and that he realised that the assumption of power by the military was inevitable. I regret to say that, after the invasion of his country by the Japanese, he was persuaded to collaborate with them by heading a Siamese goodwill mission which was sent to Tokyo by Luang Pibul in order to confirm and cement the alliance with Japan.

One of the strongest personalities among the "promoters" is Vice-Admiral Luang Sindhu Songgramjaya, an officer in the Navy who rose to be its head under the new *régime*. The former Ministry of Marine had by that time been abolished and the Navy, together with the Army, had been placed under a combined Ministry of Defence. Luang Sindhu was, however, too important a figure to be left without a portfolio, so he sat in the Cabinet as Minister of Public Instruction and later on (after the arrival of the Japanese) as Minister of Economic Affairs. Not so very long ago a traditional feud existed between the Siamese Army and Navy, but after the *coup d'état* an end was put to the manifestations of this antagonism and Luang Sindhu appeared to get on reasonably well with Luang Pibul, on condition, as it would seem, that the Navy received its due share and something more of the budgetary allotments of the Defence Ministry. Luang Sindhu used to rank as the most influential among the pro-Japanese members of the Cabinet and, in spite of his having received a naval training in Denmark, he is credited with being troubled by an anti-Western complex. I have no wish to impugn his motives, though I must deplore his attitude.

Among the civilian members of Luang Pibul's Cabinet who were classed as being well disposed towards the Democratic

Powers were Luang Dhamrong Navasvasti (the Minister of Justice), Luang Kovid Abhaivongs (the Minister of Communications) and Nai Direck Jayanâma (the Minister of Foreign Affairs). Luang Dhamrong, who began his career as a naval officer and afterwards took up the profession of the law, is considered to be the most eloquent of the speakers in the People's Assembly, and he is certainly one of the most capable of the "promoters". It is said that his conciliatory disposition has led to his being employed more than once as a *trait d'union*, or at least as a channel of communication, between the right and left wings among those chiefly responsible for the government of the country, and he was, as I have stated elsewhere, at the head of the goodwill mission despatched by Luang Pibul to Australia, India, Burma and the Straits Settlements. Luang Dhamrong speaks English surprisingly well in view of the fact that he has never studied abroad, and he is thoroughly at home in Western society. Luang Kovid Abhaivongs, a close friend of Luang Pradist, studied in France and is noted for his outspokenness and forthrightness. Nai Direck Jayanâma was one of the young liberals to whom I have already alluded as having been promoted to high office by Luang Pibul. When the latter temporarily took over the portfolio of Foreign Affairs soon after he had become Premier, Nai Direck officiated under him in the capacity of Deputy Minister. Through his modesty and affability he won golden opinions from the Diplomatic Corps, and Luang Pibul subsequently raised him to the rank of full Minister, feeling that the Department of Foreign Affairs could be safely entrusted to his hands, and he thus became the youngest of all the holders of ministerial portfolios in the Cabinet. He studied for a year or two in England and was wont to profess his friendship for, and his admiration of, that country.

At the beginning of their political careers all three of these men were to be ranked as liberals and I am not unwilling to believe that, despite their subsequent association with Luang Pibul, they have remained democrats by conviction. It must be recorded of all of them, however, that after the rallying of Luang Pibul to the side of the Japanese they still continued to collaborate with him. Luang Dhamrong and Luang Kovid retained their respective portfolios, and the former accompanied Phya Phahol on the goodwill mission to Tokyo which has been

mentioned above. Luang Kovid was dropped from the Cabinet later in circumstances involving the presidency of the People's Assembly which, if the reports that have reached me are true, redound distinctly to his credit. Nai Direck, whom the Japanese had once denounced as a tool of the British Foreign Office, was obliged to surrender his portfolio and was compelled by Luang Pibul to take up immediately afterwards the post of Ambassador in Tokyo, where his activities would, of course, be under Japanese supervision. Later on he came back to Siam and was once more appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. I never called in question his sincerity; I had conceived a warm liking for him and I regard him as an exceptionally promising young statesman for whom circumstances have been too strong.

Prominent among the members of Luang Pibul's Government in 1940 and 1941 was Colonel Prayoon Bhamorn Montri, a comparatively young man with a chequered political background. Latterly, he came into high favour with Luang Pibul, who put him at the head of the "Yuvachon" or official Youth Movement. The son of a Siamese father by a German mother, Colonel Prayoon's sympathies were notoriously pro-German and one always knew where to place him.

Another prominent personality in the new Siam is Luang Vichitr Vadhakarn, who, although himself of Chinese extraction, has distinguished himself by his anti-Chinese attitude. He has a talent for musical composition and has produced a number of popular songs, besides writing several historical dramas of less merit which have owed their success to the fact of their being blatant instruments of propaganda for the Pan-Thai movement, of which Luang Vichitr Vadhakarn, although a civilian, is the high priest. He received an education in France and was, after the *coup d'état*, made Director-General of the Department of Fine Arts at Bangkok, where he tried most unsuccessfully to revive the classical Siamese ballet by intercalating in it features drawn from the Western music-hall. He has proved himself to be the most active and virulent of all the Siamese chauvinists, and he acquired such an influence over Luang Pibul that he rose to be Minister of Foreign Affairs in succession to Nai Direck Jayanâma, and afterwards Ambassador in Tokyo. He is generally accepted as the chief guide and mentor of the present-day Siam in matters of art and culture. My only comment upon

that fact shall be that I prefer infinitely the art and culture of the old *régime* to those of the new. Luang Vichitr Vadhakarn is obviously to be placed among the sympathisers with Japan.

I prefer not to mention specifically those among Luang Pibul's colleagues and associates who had consented to be bought over by the Japanese. Their names are well known to their compatriots, with whom they have acquired the reputation which they deserve. That reputation is not a high one.

Outside the group of "promoters", but not to be classed with the "die-hards", are such men as Chao Phya Sri Dharma Dhibes, a former Minister of Justice, and also Minister of Foreign Affairs for a period under the new *régime*, until he retired from public life after a long and distinguished career. A member of the English Bar, he is a good example of the moderate type of Siamese statesman, progressive without being extreme. There is also Phya Sri Sena, a Civil Servant under the Ministry of the Interior for most of his career, who studied for a time in England, was Foreign Minister for a while under Phya Phahol, and was subsequently appointed Minister to Tokyo. He was by no means fanatically pro-Japanese and I always found in him a good friend of Britain, with a frankness, sincerity and reasonableness that I appreciated greatly. There is likewise Phya Sri Visarn Vacha, a lawyer and an Oxford man, who held the portfolio of Foreign Affairs after the *coup d'état* in the Government of Phya Manopakorn. I select the names of these gentlemen because they are familiar to me as past holders of high office. But there are others like them, and it is to men of their stamp that the liberals should look for co-operation, when the moment arrives, in the good work of shaping the future Siam.

Although members of the Siamese Royal Family are debarred by the Constitution from holding political office, a number of them have, to the advantage of the State, filled positions as civil servants since the revolution of 1932. Outstanding among these is Prince Varnvaidya Varavarn, a grandson of King Mongkut, who, at the end of 1941, had been holding for some years the combined appointment of Adviser to the Cabinet and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He is unquestionably one of the ablest men in the country. Educated at Marlborough and Oxford and also in France, Prince Varnvaidya, who speaks both English and French fluently, has been Siamese Minister in London and Paris as well as delegate to the League of Nations

at Geneva. In his capacity of Foreign Adviser he rendered conspicuous service at the time of the revision of Siam's Treaties with the foreign Powers in 1937. Subsequently, he headed the Siamese delegation which went to Tokyo in 1941 to lay before the Japanese mediators the Siamese case in the frontier dispute with French Indo-China. Prince Varnvaidya is not popular with other members of the Royal Family, who accuse him of having abandoned their cause and gone over to the enemy in 1932. There are those, indeed, who call him the Talleyrand of Siam. I have always entertained the most pleasant relations with him and I have a high respect for his talents. He continued to serve the Government after its entry into an alliance with Japan.

Another member of the Royal Family who has rendered valuable service to the new *régime* is Prince Sakol Varavarn, an elder brother of Prince Varnvaidya, who, when he returned to Siam many years ago after studying at Cambridge, attracted attention even then by his liberal opinions and must for that reason have found little difficulty in co-operating with the founders of the Constitution. Until his recent retirement he was Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior.

I do not know whether to class Prince Bidyalankarana as belonging to the old or to the new Siam. A son of the last of the Second Kings, he is generally looked upon as being, together with King Rama VI, one of the two most distinguished Siamese poets of recent times. He was at Cambridge, and held various public offices after his return from England. He retired into private life long ago but has, happily, not abandoned his literary pursuits, and from the point of view of literature and culture he shines like a good deed in the naughty world of post-revolutionary Bangkok.

I must not omit mention here of Prince Chula Chakrabongse and of his cousin Prince Birabongse, to whom passing allusion has already been made in Chapter VIII. Married as both of these Princes are to English ladies and residing as they do in England, they have stood outside the political life of Siam, though they have not held aloof from the new *régime*, for they have revisited their native country twice since the *coup d'état*. Besides being a very capable manager of the garage which made possible the motor-racing successes of his cousin, Prince Chula is a student of history and an author of books in English and

Siamese ; he has recently published an interesting autobiography under the title "Brought up in England". Prince Bira is a sculptor as well as a motor-racing "ace" and pieces executed by him have figured in exhibitions of the Royal Academy. Needless to say, Siam's declaration of war against us has been the cause of much distress to these Princes. Prince Chula has received from King George VI the distinction of G.C.V.O.

The greater number of the names mentioned in this chapter, apart from "promoters", are those of men who have been educated wholly or in part in England. This is to be explained by the fact that they made their start in life at a time, well before the *coup d'état*, when it was customary for a very large proportion of Siamese students sent abroad to receive their training in Great Britain. With the newer generation the proportion of those with an English training is less ; this is especially true of the "promoters", none of whose leaders had been sent to Britain, though both Luang Pibul and Luang Pradist had studied in France.

In this book I have retained the official titles, such as "Phya", "Luang", etc., which the Siamese kings used to confer, according to rank and nature of employment, upon the servants of the State. Some time ago Luang Pibul decreed the abolition of such titles, both retrospectively and in the future, thereby making one of those meaningless gestures so characteristic of the dictatorship which he has instituted.

CHAPTER XVIII

CHIAUVINISM IN THE NEW SIAM

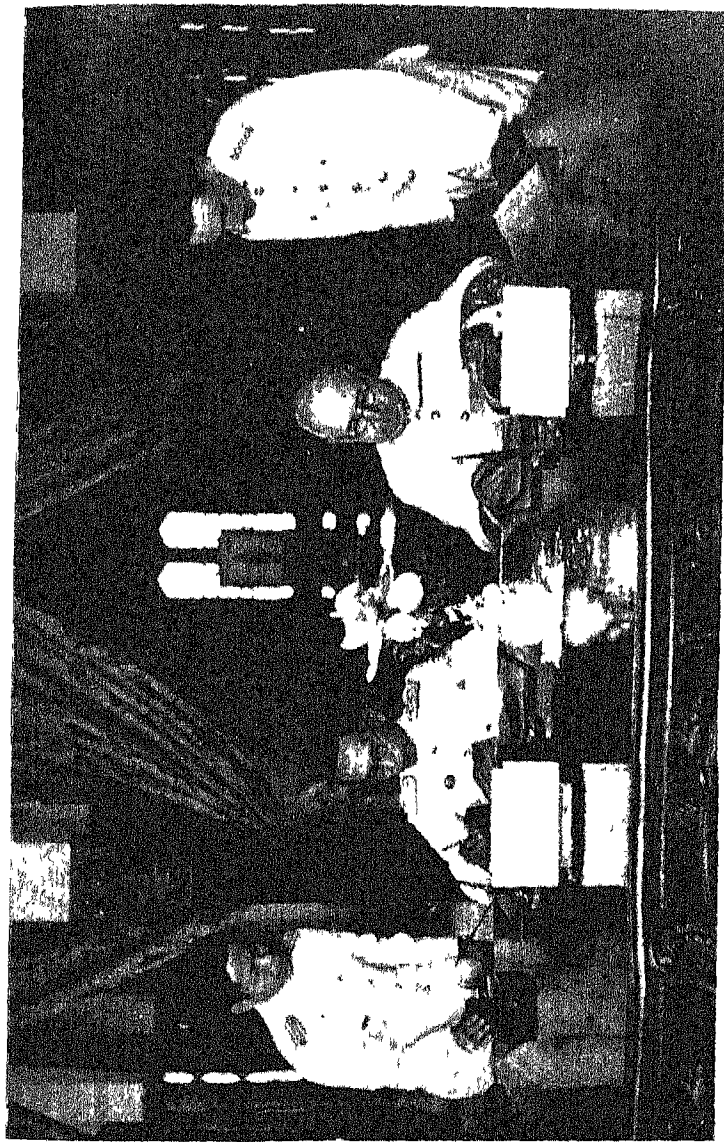
I HAVE said that an indefensible aspect of Siamese nationalist sentiment is the chauvinism which came to characterise the Government after the assumption of power by Luang Pibul and the military faction.

This tendency was first shown in the shape of a Pan-Thai agitation which sprang up at Bangkok after the *coup d'état*, tacitly encouraged by the Government of Luang Pibul, and aiming at the incorporation within the Siamese Kingdom of all those territories whose peoples are of Thai extraction. Since outside Siam these peoples are to be found chiefly in the Laos Protectorate of French Indo-China and in the Shan States (most of which form part of the British Empire, though some of them are situated within the Chinese Republic), it follows that this Pan-Thai movement cut across the interests not merely of France, but of Britain and, to a lesser degree, of China as well. With respect to France, of course, it linked up with the irredentist sentiment about which I have written previously. On the face of it the agitation may not seem to be altogether unreasonable, inasmuch as Bangkok constitutes the sole important centre of Thai culture and learning, so that, if ever a federation of the various Thai-speaking peoples were to be effected, it would logically have Siam for its centre. It is a very open question, however, whether the Thais outside Siam itself have any desire to come under the political domination of Bangkok; the suggestions to that effect have all of them come from the Siamese side, and there is every reason to suppose that the rulers of the British Shan States, for example, would prefer their relatively independent status within the British Empire to absorption within the orbit of Siam. Moreover, so far as I could see, there was no general popular feeling among the Siamese themselves in favour of acquiring possession of the Shan States, though the irredentist sentiment with respect to the Thai-speaking territories on the left bank of the Mekong, and still more to the Cambodian province of Battambang (nearer to Bangkok and

inhabited by a population of mixed Cambodian and Thai stock), was both widely prevalent and of long standing. The Pan-Thai agitation, whatever might be said for it on theoretical and idealistic grounds and apart from the question of irredentism, thus had no very firm basis in reality. Nevertheless, it was not disapproved and, as I have said, it was even tacitly encouraged, by Luang Pibul's Government, the public being exhorted constantly in official broadcasts to be Thai-minded, by which was obviously meant being "Thai-minded" in the widest sense of the word.

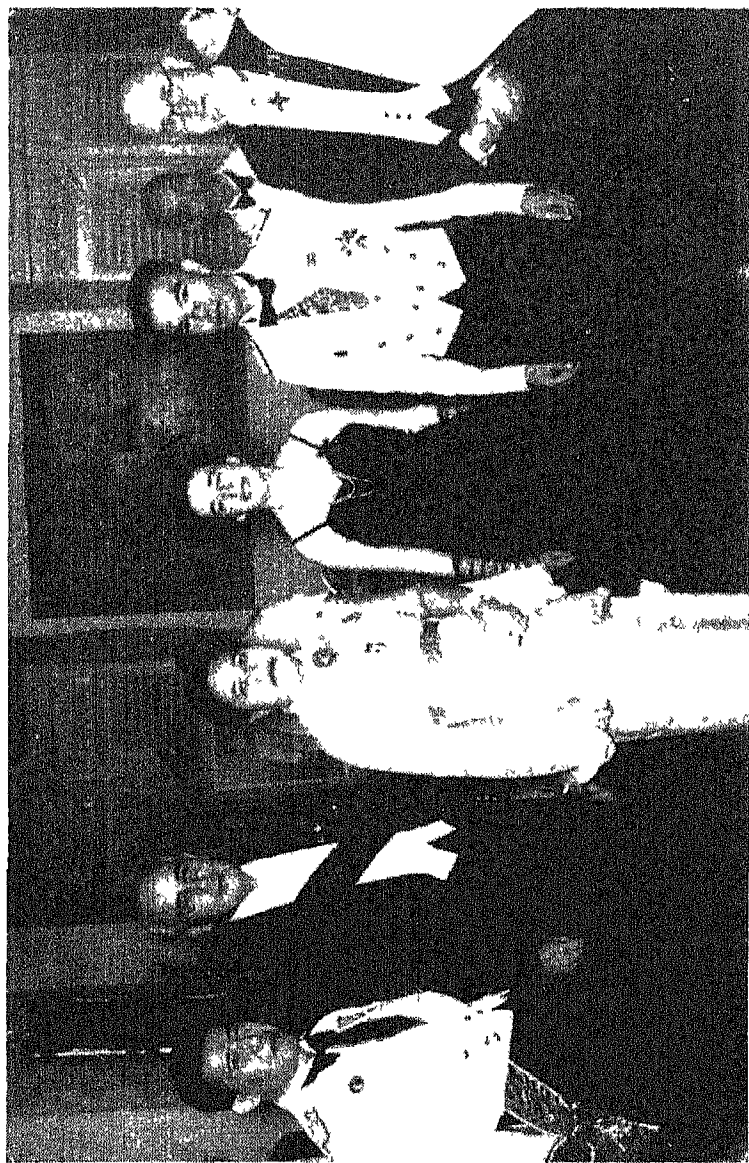
This Pan-Thai agitation will explain why it was that, a few years ago, Luang Pibul decided to suppress the use of the terms "Siam" and "Siamese", hitherto employed almost universally by foreigners, and to substitute for them the words "Thailand" and "Thai". Up to then the Siamese themselves had been in the habit of referring to their native land either as "Sayam" (a word of foreign origin) or as "Muang Thai" or "Prathet Thai", but their word for the adjective "Siamese" was always exclusively "Thai". Luang Pibul may appear at first sight to have been making no very great change when he ordained that the foreign equivalents of those terms should be made to correspond more exactly to the nomenclature in use in Siam itself, and that the alternative word "Sayam" should be dropped by the Siamese. But the fact that an official change of nomenclature should have been made in coincidence with the launching of the Pan-Thai movement may be interpreted not unfairly as the indication of a desire to familiarise outsiders with the claim of Siam to be regarded as the mother-country of all peoples of Thai race. Because of the heritage of chauvinism surrounding the change, it is in my opinion desirable that the words "Siam" and "Siamese" should again be employed.

Side by side with the Pan-Thai agitation there existed—more especially after Luang Pibul became Prime Minister—another movement, directed against ourselves, in the nature of Imperialism in the worst sense and exhibiting the very same appetite for mere territorial aggrandisement for which Oriental countries, not excepting Siam herself, have been bitterly reproaching some of the Western Powers to-day. This second movement encouraged Siamese aspirations for the "recovery" of those territories in Lower Burma and the Malay Peninsula already



SIGNATURE OF THE ANGLO-SIAMESE PACT OF NON-AGGRESSION

Field-Marshal Luang Pibul Songgram, the Prime Minister of Siam, is seated to the left.
The author is seated next to him, on the right



VINT OF SIR SHENTON THOMAS, GOVERNOR OF THE STRAITS SETTLEMENTS
From left to right Luang Pradist Manudharm, Sir Shenton Thomas Khun Ying Sri Dharma Dhibes Lady
Thomas, Chao Phya Sr. Dharma Dhibes (Minister of Foreign Affairs), the author

mentioned as the objects in former times of the ambitions of Siamese monarchs who wished to incorporate them in their dominions, or at the least to establish suzerainty over them. The districts in Lower Burma here in question were situated in the present Division of Tenasserim, in the neighbourhood of Merguy and Tavoy ; admittedly, they had at one time formed part of the Kingdom of Siam, but they had finally passed into the possession of Burma at the end of the eighteenth century and were subsequently acquired from the Burmese by Great Britain. They had thus been out of Siamese possession for about one hundred and fifty years and their associations with Siam had in the meantime become very tenuous. In the Malay Peninsula the extreme Siamese nationalists dreamt of "recovering" also (absurd though it may seem) the island of Penang, which, as stated previously, was formerly under the rule of the Sultan of Kedah, who leased it to the British East India Company in 1791. In addition to these claims, preposterous on the face of them, the out-and-out Siamese imperialists included likewise in their programme the "return" to them of the four Malay States of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu, the nominal suzerainty over which, as related in Chapter X, had been voluntarily transferred to the British Crown by the Siamese in 1909.

Since these States were inhabited by Moslem Malays who had never willingly submitted to the overlordship of Siam, the suggestion that they should be "restored" to that country is so unreasonable as to call for no refutation. Although beyond doubt entertained by the more extreme Siamese chauvinists, this ambition to benefit territorially at the expense of Lower Burma and Malaya, where the argument of a common race and language did not apply, was not encouraged openly by Luang Pibul prior to the incursion into Siam of the Japanese ; in other words, the movement remained more or less underground so long as Luang Pibul continued to desire good relations with Britain. Nevertheless, implied approval of the aspirations of this class of chauvinist was proved by the publication by the Ministry of Defence of a special map, with legend attached, displayed in schools and public buildings throughout the country. This showed the boundaries in former times of the Siamese Kingdom, including not only the Thai-speaking areas on the east bank of the Mekong River, but also the districts in Lower Burma already

mentioned, together with Penang, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu. The appearance of this map led quite understandably to remonstrances from myself and from the French Chargé d'Affaires ; they elicited from Luang Pibul the unconvincing reply that the map was intended for educational purposes only, in order to teach the Siamese more about the past history of their country.

It is hardly necessary for me to say that these far-reaching aspirations were encouraged by the Japanese and, shortly before Japan actually attacked us, the Tokyo Press was openly advising the Siamese Government to demand from Britain the "restoration" of the four Malay States named above. It is my belief, indeed, that it was principally owing to their instigation that Luang Pibul gave even covert support to the suggestion that the Siamese frontiers should be extended to the detriment of Malaya and Burma. As I interpret his attitude, he had no intention of making trouble with us on that score if he could help it ; on the other hand, if Britain was defeated by Japan (and the Japanese were constantly assuring him that this would happen), he was resolved to make the most of the situation that would then arise and to acquire for Siam as much loot as possible. It is significant that, in January, 1942, when attempting to justify to the Siamese people the declaration of war against Great Britain for which he had been responsible, Luang Pibul revealed in a broadcast address to the public that, in return for taking the side of Japan, Siam would benefit by a promise made to her by the Japanese that she should recover the territories of which she had been "deprived" by the British. There can be no doubt that the great bulk of the Siamese people were indifferent to the question of the future ownership of the various territories which we are now discussing ; it did not arouse their interest, much less their enthusiasm and, as far as I could see, the Siamese liberals had neither part nor lot in the extravagant claims put forward by the chauvinists. Here the agitation was wholly artificial and was confined to the military party and their civilian hangers-on.

The promise made by Japan to which Luang Pibul referred in his broadcast has since been fulfilled in part, Siam having been allowed to take possession of the four Malay States, and also of the two British Shan States of Keng Tung and Möng Pan. It is reasonable to suppose that Japan must have handed

over the four Malay territories to Siam with reluctance, for such a step goes clean counter to her loudly professed intention of restoring, or preserving, the independence, native traditions and national identity of each and all of the countries of the Far East. There can thus be no excuse for her having surrendered hundreds of thousands of Moslem Malays to the domination of Buddhist Siamese, and the sincerity of her intentions cannot now fail to be called in question by the rulers and peoples of the other Malay States in the Peninsula, who must be justly indignant over this complete sacrifice of Malay interests to the land-hunger of Luang Pibul and his friends. I conjecture that Luang Pibul may have forced the hands of the Japanese in this matter by pleading that, unless some such concession were made to him, he was bound to lose face with his own people as having secured no *quid pro quo* for his adhesion to the cause of Japan. It may be taken as certain, however, that the average Siamese will not allow these territorial acquisitions, which can mean little or nothing to him personally, to outweigh his objections to the state of virtual servitude to Japan to which Luang Pibul has reduced him. Keng Tung and Mông Pan are sparsely populated and relatively unproductive districts and have never been effectively included within the Siamese dominions. It is to be noted that the great majority of the British Shan States have apparently not been given by the Japanese to Siam, presumably through fear of offending the newly formed puppet Government in Burma.

Luang Pibul and his followers are responsible for having devised an insidious means of ultra-patriotic propaganda through the "Yuvachon" or "Young Siamese" movement, which has been founded among the male students in the schools throughout the country and in the two universities at Bangkok. This movement was inaugurated under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence, by which it is controlled, its members being formed into a corps, put into uniform, subjected to military drill and made to listen to frequent lectures on the subject of patriotism by their military instructors. In return for submitting themselves to this regimentation, students undergo a shorter period of service with the colours than is usual when the time comes for them to be conscribed as soldiers. To the "Yuvachon" Corps there has been added a similar organisation made up of

girl students who are supposed to qualify for duty as nurses in time of war. In my opinion this movement, perverted as it has been by the extreme nationalists to their own ends, is perhaps the most dangerous of all factors in the make-up of the new Siam. It is, of course, not peculiar to present-day Siam ; one is faced with the same sort of thing in those totalitarian or militarist countries in which youth is being similarly indoctrinated and from which Luang Pibul doubtless took his cue.

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CHAPTER XIX

THE BOUNDARY DISPUTE WITH FRENCH INDO-CHINA

A PARTICULARLY regrettable exhibition of Siamese chauvinism occurred in the dispute which arose with France, after Luang Pibul's accession to power, over the question of the boundary with French Indo-China.

The background for this dispute will be found in the circumstances described in Chapter XI of the present book, but I should explain that, under the latest Franco-Siamese Treaty effecting a territorial settlement between the two countries, Siam had pledged herself to respect the line of frontier as then laid down, so that, strictly speaking, the Government of Luang Pibul had no right to raise the issue at all. It could not resist the temptation to do so, however, after France had become engaged in the European war, though at the beginning the demands which it put forward were not unreasonable in themselves. Under their Treaty arrangements with France the Siamese had accepted as the frontier along the River Mekong, in the region where that stream formed the international boundary, a line which gave to Indo-China all the islands situated in the river, irrespective of the "thalweg" or deep-water channel. The islands, or islets, in question were of no intrinsic importance, but many of them, little more than sand-banks, were united to the Siamese mainland at the season of low water and, this being so, it can be readily understood that their subjection to French jurisdiction must have proved embarrassing to the Siamese, upon occasion, from the administrative point of view; for instance, a criminal escaping from Siamese territory to one of these immediately adjacent islets became immune from arrest by the Siamese police, and his surrender to them could only be obtained by the round-about method of application to the French authorities. The Siamese accordingly requested that the islands in the Mekong situated on their side of the "thalweg" should now be assigned to them and, in the light of what has just been stated, their demand for a re-delimitation of the boundary in that sense had

a good deal to be said for it. They were able to support their case by the argument that it was the general international practice, when a river constitutes the frontier between two States, to draw the line of demarcation at the "thalweg", and they were further able to point to a recent precedent furnished by ourselves with respect to the boundary between Siam and Burma.

But the Government in Paris and, after the collapse of France, the Government installed at Vichy would not hear of this idea at first, although the French Minister at Bangkok pleaded for its acceptance in the interests of Franco-Siamese friendship. Finally, however, after some heated exchanges the Vichy Government did signify its consent to the proposal, and it was decided to appoint a mixed French and Siamese commission to define exactly where the boundary line should be placed in conformity with the new principle. But, when it came to the point of nominating the Siamese members of this commission, Luang Pibul's Government found that its appetite had grown, and proceeded to extend its demands by asking that the Mekong River should be constituted the boundary from the north down as far as the frontier of Cambodia. This change would entail the cession by France to Siam of two pieces of territory situated on the west bank of the stream. Although these strips of territory were of no great value, and although the assignment of the Mekong as the international frontier in the region in question might appear to be a convenient and common-sense course to follow, it is not surprising that the Vichy Government should have rejected this eleventh-hour augmentation of Siam's original claim. The fat was then fairly in the fire. Determined to profit by the defeat of France in Europe and by the quasi-occupation of Indo-China by the Japanese following upon it, Luang Pibul refused to ratify the newly signed Pact of Non-Aggression with the French Government unless his territorial requirements were fully satisfied. And those requirements continued to grow until, throwing moderation to the winds, he went on to demand the retrocession to Siam of the Cambodian provinces of Battambang, Siemrap and Sisiphon, which had formerly been in Siamese possession but which the Siamese had restored to Cambodia in virtue of the Treaty signed by them with France in 1907. Nor was this all, for he ultimately had the effrontery to include within the scope of his claims the entire Kingdom of Cambodia, regardless of the fact that that country had at no time formed a part of

the Siamese dominions in any valid sense and that its people differed both racially and linguistically from the Siamese.

The presentation of these exaggerated demands reflected little credit upon Luang Pibul and his Government and what followed was still less creditable to them. Heedless of all warnings from our side against any attempt at effecting territorial readjustments by resort to force, the Siamese finally became involved in hostilities with the French along the whole length of the Indo-Chinese frontier. It may be a disputed point as to who actually fired the first shot in these hostilities, but there can be no question that the Siamese prosecuted them with ardour, albeit the conflict, fortunately, never attained the proportions of a serious war. Nevertheless, engagements took place on land, at sea and in the air, a number of persons were killed and yet others were taken prisoner. These events were all the more unfortunate because they led to outbursts of xenophobia and to anti-Christian (more especially anti-Roman Catholic) demonstrations among the Siamese population. There can be no doubt that the Government gave secret encouragement to these manifestations, which were accompanied by a blind and indiscriminating form of spy-mania in official circles. Many persons (most of them foreigners) were arrested on charges of espionage and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment on the flimsiest evidence.

The demonstrations were chiefly against the Roman Catholics for the reason that the French, who were looked upon then as national enemies "number one", were for the greater part of that persuasion and included the majority of the Roman Catholic missionaries. Priests were in a number of cases ill-treated or insulted, and attempts were made in some instances to remove the cross from sacred buildings. We ourselves became involved in these proceedings, since I had occasion to protest against an alleged attempt upon the life of a nun who was a British subject. Steps were thereupon taken to put an end to such incidents by the Siamese authorities, who realised the scandal which was being caused. Another unhappy feature of these chauvinistic excesses was the pressure brought to bear upon Siamese Christians in the service of the Government, who were given to understand that they could not hope for advancement unless they were converted to the Buddhist faith. It is with regret that I record these disgraceful happenings, which form such a blot upon the administration of Luang Pibul. It was left for me to witness this

display of intolerance at the very end of my long period of residence in Siam, and I am sure that it was deplored by the better elements among the Siamese themselves.

The dispute over the Indo-Chinese border was finally settled through the mediation of the Japanese, who insisted upon the cessation of the Franco-Siamese hostilities and upon reference of the questions at issue to Tokyo for arbitration. Early in 1941, therefore, a Siamese delegation headed by Prince Varnvaidya was sent to Japan in order to present the Siamese case for a re-delineation of the frontier. A similar delegation, headed by the French Ambassador in Tokyo, put the case for Indo-China and in the event Siam benefited by the award of the territories which she desired on the west bank of the Mekong, but of no more than a portion of the Cambodian provinces mentioned previously. No one except the Japanese was content with this award; the French resented bitterly having to yield up any territory at all, whilst the Siamese nationalists were far from satisfied at having obtained so much less than they wanted. Taking the broad view, it would assuredly have been better for both France and Siam if they could have arrived at some agreement between themselves without affording an opportunity for intervention by the Japanese. Unhappily, neither party was willing to compromise, with the result that Japan was able to thrust herself forward as the guardian of international peace in South-Eastern Asia and to take a notable step in the direction of establishing her "New Order". It has been suggested that the Siamese territorial demands upon Indo-China were put forward at the instigation of Japan. I do not take that view. The dispute manifestly had its ultimate origin in the old irredentist feeling against France, though the Japanese did not neglect to intensify and exploit that feeling to suit their own purposes. But I ascribe the preposterous nature of the demands finally advanced by Luang Pibul chiefly to the unbounded vainglory of himself and his friends. Those demands proved too much for even the Japanese to swallow, since in the meantime French Indo-China had developed into a sort of down-trodden Protectorate of their own. So they squared the circle by awarding to Siam a portion of what she was seeking, but by no means the whole of it.

I think, however, that Japanese propaganda was largely responsible for that regrettable outbreak of xenophobia among

a section of the Siamese public to which I have alluded as accompanying the course of the territorial dispute with France. The preaching by the Japanese of the Pan-Asiatic gospel, though it failed in its object of rallying the Siamese people to the side of Japan, did at least serve to add dangerous fuel in the case of some of them to the fire of nationalism, which the Government had been fanning so industriously since the establishment of the new *régime* and more especially under Luang Pibul. Japanese misrepresentations of the Occidental as an intruder in Asia and an oppressor of the Asiatic peoples did not fall upon wholly barren soil, and they helped to create towards the end a degree of anti-Western feeling which made social contacts between Europeans and Siamese less easy than before. But the latter-day spirit of exaggerated nationalism among some of the Siamese was not exclusively antipathetic to the Western nations; it took on the complexion of a more general form of xenophobia and could manifest itself upon occasion in displays of hostility towards Asiatics such as Chinese or Indians, or even, with a boomerang effect, towards the Japanese themselves. It is of interest to note that, towards the end of my time in Siam, street brawls between Siamese and Japanese were not infrequent at Bangkok, even Siamese soldiers being in some cases involved in them.

CHAPTER XX

BRITAIN VERSUS JAPAN. NEUTRAL SIAM

THE rise of the military dictatorship in Siam, the chauvinism of the military party and the circumstance that Siam is at war with us to-day may perhaps seem to indicate that, from the moment when hostilities broke out in Europe in September, 1939, the sympathies of the Siamese Government must have been with the Axis Powers and their sleeping partner, Japan, and that, once Japan had gone to war with us herself, it was a foregone conclusion that Siam would be associated with her. Yet, as a matter of fact, any such supposition would be wide of the mark, for reasons upon which I have already entered in Chapter XII.

For one thing, we have to reckon with the traditional policy of Siam in her international relationships, which has been undeviatingly one of studied neutrality. Her rulers in modern times have all of them been astute enough to see that, for a small country in her position, the only hope of maintaining independence lay in preserving good relations with those among the great Powers who were most interested in her affairs and in keeping a nice balance between them. Until quite recently this meant a balance between Britain and France, and Siamese statesmen had proved themselves to be past-masters in the art of playing off those two countries against one another whenever it suited them to do so. They were careful to avoid antagonising either of them, and they counted upon the self-interest of each to prevent encroachments by the other upon her sovereign rights and territorial integrity. No patriotic Siamese of reasonable intelligence would have thought of advocating any other line of foreign policy than this for his country; and since, whatever may be their faults, neither Luang Pibul nor the majority of his military coadjutors were devoid of patriotism, and since they do not all of them lack intelligence, it follows that, when France fell out of the picture in 1940, they desired to see the balance of power with respect to South-Eastern Asia in general, and to Siam

in particular, maintained between Britain, as before, and Japan as a substitute for France.

Moreover, the Siamese people did not feel particularly drawn towards the Japanese, whom they had always regarded with indifference. As for Japanese propaganda—the appeal to Pan-Asiatic sentiment and to a common religion, and the dangled inducements of a “New Order”—we have seen that these arguments did not weigh for much with the Siamese leaders, who were not slow to “debunk” them. Hence it happened that the outbreak of war in Europe at first made no very observable difference to Siam’s foreign policy, despite the fact that Luang Pibul had already profited by the example furnished by Hitler and Mussolini to set himself up as a dictator. This held good up to the collapse of France in June, 1940, prior to which date the Government of Luang Pibul continued to entertain perfectly friendly relations with the French Government, being ready to conclude a Pact of Non-Aggression with it no less than with ourselves. Thereafter, as we know, professions of friendship for France ceased altogether and were replaced by an acrimonious territorial dispute. But, even after Dunkirk, Luang Pibul’s relations with ourselves remained to all appearances unclouded, and I think it can be said that they did not deteriorate in actual fact. This was partly because the Siamese had come to know us and respect us, and partly because the last thing which Siamese statesmen, including Luang Pibul and his associates, wished to see was any one foreign Power (in this case Japan) in a position of unchallenged supremacy in the Far East.

Finally, there was the very material consideration of military strength, for Luang Pibul was alive to the fact that Britain’s defeat in France did not necessarily mean that she was defeated in Europe for good and all, so long as she could rely upon the moral and the material help of the United States, which might one day actually participate in the war as her ally. As regards the Far East, Luang Pibul—like ourselves, like the rest of the world, excepting only Japan—could not bring himself to believe, despite all Japanese assurances to the contrary, that the fortress of Singapore was other than impregnable, and he was not yet convinced that Britain could be dislodged from Malaya or Burma in the event of a Japanese attack upon those territories. Since he is a born opportunist and, since it is power-politics which count for most

with him and his like, it will be understood that he was not going to quarrel with us unless and until he was quite sure that we were "down and out". In the event of an armed conflict between Britain and Japan, Luang Pibul's first instinct would thus be to remain neutral as long as he could, but he was resolved to come down from his fence on the side of the victor in that struggle as soon as he was satisfied that he had spotted him. The course of events, as known to me, goes to show that he did not definitely resolve to side with Japan until the last moment. Before that moment arrived, the Japanese did not have much success in their attempts to undermine our position in Siam, however willingly Luang Pibul may have seemed to listen to the insidious proposals which they no doubt were making to him.

It is true that the Japanese could embarrass us with their encouragement of the Siamese chauvinists in the desire to benefit territorially at our expense. This appeal might influence not a little those among the military who were patriotic without being too intelligent, but I do not think that Luang Pibul and the other military leaders, for all their vaingloriousness, were so stupid as to wish to quarrel with us on that ground or to set the advantage arising from the acquisition of a certain amount of territory against the much greater advantage for Siam of a continued balance of power in her part of the world. They were willing enough to profit to such extent as they could in the event of our defeat, but they did not wish for our defeat in itself. It was chiefly Cambodia and the Thai States on the east bank of the Mekong River which they wished to acquire. In the event Japan has given them only a small portion of Cambodia, whilst Luang Prabang and Vientiane still remain in the nominal possession of France—effectively in that of the Japanese. The present which Japan has since made to Siam of four small Malay States in the Peninsula and of two unimportant Shan States is not likely to console Luang Pibul and his following for this disappointment; they probably feel that they have been badly fobbed off by Japan.

The most powerful weapon against us in the Japanese armoury was, as I have emphasised before, the argument of force. To this we had, in the last resort, no adequate reply; but, until the worst happened to us at the end of 1941, we were

able to make effective play with our steady appeal to the Siamese Government that it should continue with its wonted policy of neutrality in face of the prevailing national alignments. Upon one occasion, when I happened to be visiting Singapore, I pleased the Siamese by stating in the course of a Press interview my conviction that it was the policy of their Government to be "the friend of all and the foe of none". This statement was quoted with approval by the Press at Bangkok, and it gratified both Luang Pibul and the Siamese Minister of Foreign Affairs. Later on, when the international barometer fell so low that there was talk of Siam becoming a theatre of war between Britain and Japan, the Siamese Government made repeated public announcements to the effect that it was determined to maintain the neutrality of the country and that it would oppose by force any attempt to violate it. The value attaching to that statement is discussed in a subsequent chapter.

That I am not exaggerating when I say that, up to the end, our relations with the Government of Luang Pibul did not cease to be cordial is indicated by evidence coming from the Japanese themselves. A message from the Domei News Agency dated Bangkok, 31st July, 1942, when I was on the point of being repatriated to England after eight months of internment in Siam, contained the following sentence: "Among the foreigners leaving (on repatriation) is included the British Minister, who displayed a formidable ability to conciliate Thailand". I regard this as one of the most handsome compliments ever paid to me!

It is not to be denied that there was a pro-Japanese party in Siam, although it was not a large one. It included, I regret to say, a few venal persons who had, beyond reasonable doubt, allowed themselves to be bought by the Japanese and were working on their behalf from motives of personal advantage, whether of monetary bribes received or in prospect, or of promises of power and preferment when the "New Order" should have been established. In addition to these people the pro-Japanese faction also included, if I am not mistaken, a certain number of patriotic Siamese who had convinced themselves that the future in the Far East lay with Japan, that the stars of Britain and the other Occidental Powers were setting rapidly and that it would be to Siam's advantage to range herself with

the prospective victors in the struggle which was impending. Doubt need not be cast upon the motives of these men ; it may be conceded that they were, first and foremost, good Siamese and that, if they were inclined to steer the national course by the Japanese compass, it was because they believed they would be serving the best interests of their country by doing so. Yet, even in the case of this second and more honest category of sympathisers with Japan, I question whether they advocated the abandonment of a policy of neutrality until it was conclusively evident that Japan would succeed in realising her ambitious designs. And there was also a pro-British, and at the same time pro-American, faction among the Siamese which was drawn from the ranks of the professed liberals. Here the motive was more idealistic and grounded upon an attachment to the principle of democracy, which had all along made it natural that intellectuals of this class should wish in their hearts for the victory of the United Nations over their Axis adversaries. To them may be added the large number of Siamese who had studied in Britain or the United States.

I am not suggesting, however, that the liberals, for all their democratic sympathies, favoured a policy of anything but neutrality for Siam as being the common-sense one for a country in her position to adopt ; it can be said of them, none the less, that they were not likely to be influenced by Japanese propaganda. But the general body of thinking Siamese were neither pronouncedly pro-British nor pronouncedly pro-Japanese ; they were, I would repeat, above all things neutral. Yet I make this statement with the following reservation. Though the average Siamese would unquestionably have preferred to see his country benefit by the indefinite prolongation of the balance of power in South-Eastern Asia as between Britain and Japan, I believe that, if a choice had been forced upon him and if it had been guaranteed that he could make it with safety, he would have opted in favour of a British rather than a Japanese ascendancy as being the less dangerous of the two. This selection would have been made, to put in on no higher ground, on the principle that it is more prudent to consort with the devil whom one already knows than with the devil with whom one is less familiar. And I believe that what I have just said applies to the majority of the military faction and to their leader Luang Pibul himself, no less than to most

other Siamese. In the final resort it was our military weakness in the Far East which, as soon as it had become plain to all, led to the alliance between Japan and Siam. Had we been able to hold our own against our adversary, I have no doubt that Siam would have continued to maintain her neutrality. I will go further and will say that, if we had shown signs of getting the better of Japan at the outset of our struggle with her, that neutrality would have been a benevolent one so far as we were concerned and the possibility would not have been excluded of Siam joining forces with us.

SECTION V

WAR

CHAPTER XXI

HOW WAR CAME TO SIAM

If the period of Constitutional Government in Siam lasted for less than six years, the military dictatorship of Luang Pibul was to endure for an even shorter time before it became swallowed up in a tyranny still more onerous and more odious for the Siamese people, namely, that of Japan. The following narrative describes how the Japanese thunder cloud finally burst and discharged itself over the country.

At about six o'clock on the morning of Monday, 8th December, 1941, I received a visit from a member of the British community at Bangkok who conveyed to me the momentous news that before dawn that same morning the Japanese had landed armed parties in Southern Siam, as well as a few troops at Bang Poo, which was a newly created seaside resort near Paknam, at the mouth of the Bangkok River.* My visitor had received his information from a reliable source; whilst it dismayed me, I was not astounded by it, for the international situation had by that time

* It transpired subsequently that the points in Southern Siam at which Japanese landings had taken place were Singora, Patani, Nakhon Sri Thammarat and Bandon, and that Japanese troops had at the same time entered Siam from the land side in the recently constituted province of Pibul Songgram, which consisted of territory in the north-east only lately ceded to the Siamese by France. On the same morning the Japanese had likewise landed parties in Northern Malaya, whilst their treacherous attack on Pearl Harbour, of which we did not hear until later, was being delivered simultaneously.

The attack on Pearl Harbour took place on 7th December, whilst the landings in Siam and Northern Malaya were made on 8th December. In reality they all occurred on the same day, the apparent difference in date being due to the circumstance that, whereas Pearl Harbour is situated in west longitude according to the meridian of Greenwich, Northern Malaya and Siam lie to the east of the same meridian. A day is, of course, "gained" in passing from west to east longitude and *vice versa*.

become so tense that matters were clearly approaching a crisis. I was in consequence prepared for the worst; in particular, the possibility of a Japanese invasion of British territory through Siam had never been absent from the minds of any of us.

For obvious reasons it is not possible for me to furnish a detailed account of all the developments which occurred within the next few days or of all the previous events which led up to them, but the facts set forth below are either generally known already or are of such a nature that objection can scarcely be taken to their publication at the present time.

After hearing my informant's story my first thought was to ascertain where the Siamese Government stood in this lamentable business, whilst my second preoccupation was to make immediate arrangements, if possible, for the evacuation to British territory—which in the circumstances could only mean to the Shan States and Burma—of the local British colony. For these purposes I lost no time in getting into touch with Nai Direck Jayanâma, the Foreign Minister, who was able to receive me that same afternoon. I saw him again on the following day (the 9th), but that was my last visit to him as thereafter I was cut off from the outside world and was interned by the Japanese in His Majesty's Legation. Nai Direck confirmed the news of the Japanese landings in Siam. He told me that, at eleven o'clock on the night of 7th December, the Japanese Ambassador had unexpectedly sought an interview with himself, with the Deputy Prime Minister and with the Minister of Defence in the absence from the capital of the Premier, who had recently left Bangkok and was then at Aranya Pradesa, a place close to the Cambodian frontier.* (According to the *Bangkok Times*, this suddenly convened conference took place at the Prime Minister's official residence.) The Ambassador informed the three Ministers in question that the Japanese were obliged to attack Malaya and Burma through Siam, and that his instructions were to ask the Siamese Government to permit the passage across Siamese territory of Japanese troops. This permission was required within a period of two hours, that is to say, by one o'clock on the following morning; in fact, the Ambassador delivered an

* I have since heard upon what I believe to be good authority that, as a matter of fact, Luang Pibul had proceeded in all haste to Battambang, because he had received news that the Japanese had entered that town and had seized the cypher codes in the possession of the Siamese authorities there.

ultimatum without even assigning a reasonable interval for an answer. The three Ministers replied that they could do nothing without previously consulting the Prime Minister, who subsequently returned to Bangkok on the morning of 8th December.

In the meantime, without waiting for a reply from the Siamese Government, the Japanese had proceeded with their landings and some resistance to them had been offered by the Siamese Army and Police, but the Prime Minister had ordered the "cease fire" within half an hour of his reaching the capital. Thereafter a Cabinet meeting had been held at which it was decided to reject certain proposals put forward by the Ambassador for an alliance between Japan and Siam, which was to have been accompanied by a promise of the "restoration" of some of Siam's "lost provinces", and to give to the Japanese no more than the right of passage for their forces across Siamese territory, provided that the troops did not remain at Bangkok longer than was necessary. Nai Direck seemed deeply moved by this swift and brutal course of events which, to judge from his demeanour, had come as a very great shock to him. He sympathised with my anxiety to ensure the evacuation of the British community and, at my second interview with him, undertook to arrange with the Director-General of State Railways for the provision of a special train to convey us all to Nakhon Lampang, on the Northern Railway, whence we should be able to proceed by road to the Siamese frontier and from there into the British Shan State of Keng Tung, *en route* for Burma. The Director-General of Railways, after being approached by Nai Direck, agreed to put two trains, on the evening of 10th December, at my disposal and at that of my United States colleague (Mr. Willys Peck), for the purpose of evacuating our respective communities. Nai Direck informed me accordingly by telephone and asked that Mr. Peck and myself should call upon the Director-General on the morning of the 10th in order to settle details.

Meanwhile, on the afternoon of the 8th, some Japanese troops had actually entered Bangkok and the Siamese Government had issued a *communiqué* stating that a continuation of resistance to the Japanese would entail a waste of Siamese lives without the gaining of any advantage and that it had in consequence become necessary to accede to the request of the Japanese Government for the passage of its forces, in return

for a guarantee from it in writing that it would respect Siam's independence, integrity and honour. On both the 8th and the 9th of December Japanese soldiers were placed on guard outside the gates of the British Legation—an ominous sign—but the gates were not shut and the inmates of the compound were still free to leave it or to return to it as they liked. At midnight on the 9th, however, the gates were closed upon us and on the morning of the 10th the members of my staff and I woke up to the unpleasant fact that we were interned and that no one would in future be permitted either to leave the Legation from within or to enter it from without. This state of affairs lasted for eight months, at the end of which time we were repatriated. Similar treatment was meted out to my United States colleague and his staff, the Netherlands Chargé d'Affaires and his staff being similarly interned in the Dutch Legation.

For some unexplained reason Mr. Peck enjoyed a fleeting spell of liberty on 10th December, and was able to keep the appointment made for us both to call upon the Director-General of Railways on the morning of that day, whereas I myself was prevented from observing the *rendezvous* since I was shut up continuously as from midnight of the 9th. My inability to visit the Director-General was not very material, however, since by that time it was clear that the Japanese were in full charge of the situation and that they were not going to allow the evacuation of anybody. No special trains were in the event forthcoming, and some British subjects who endeavoured to leave Bangkok for the north by ordinary train on the morning of the 10th were turned back by the Japanese military, who had by then assumed control of the railway system.

Needless to say, as soon as I had been shut up in the Legation I protested vigorously to the Siamese Foreign Office over the telephone—which was, alas! the only means of communication left open to me—against my incarceration and demanded that liberty should at once be restored to myself and to those who were with me. I had two conversations by telephone upon this subject with Nai Direck, who expressed indignation at our imprisonment and who promised to make urgent representations to the Prime Minister with a view to securing our release. Nothing came of this promise, however, and communication with the outside world even by telephone was rendered impossible for me when a Japanese non-commissioned officer and some

soldiers entered the Legation premises on the afternoon of the 18th and removed all telephones and wireless receiving sets in our possession. What was more serious from my own point of view than the loss of our telephones was the circumstance that, as soon as the Japanese had arrived and even before I was actually interned, it was no longer possible for me to communicate with my Government in London. True, I had, during the short interval that elapsed immediately before I was shut up, sent a number of messages addressed to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the Central Telegraph Office at Bangkok for despatch, and these messages had been accepted there, but it appears that they were never, in fact, sent off. Moreover, for a brief while after our internment had begun, Siamese telegraph messengers used to turn up at the Legation with telegrams some of which, I feel confident, emanated from London but none of which the Japanese guards would allow to be delivered. I concluded from this fact that it was not the Siamese, but the Japanese, authorities who were standing in my path and this impression was supported by the further circumstance that Nai Direck Jayanâma, after the gates of the Legation had been closed upon me, himself consented to take down at my dictation over the telephone a message from myself to the British Foreign Office, which he undertook to send off in my name. A little later, however, I was rung up by Luang Vichitr Vadhakarn, who was then assisting in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and who told me civilly enough that it had not been practicable for Nai Direck to fulfil his promise. I have since learnt from an informant whom I am disposed to credit that it was Luang Pibul who insisted on my telegrams being held up. Whoever may have been responsible for this attitude of obstruction, the fact remains that, throughout the crucial two days following immediately upon the Japanese invasion, the opportunity was denied to me of acquainting my Government with what was happening or of receiving instructions from it as to the action which I should take.

The events just narrated go to show that at the very beginning the Siamese response to the demands of the Japanese did not go beyond yielding to *force majeure* without the promise of active collaboration, and that the attitude of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and of the Director-General of Railways (who was also a member of the Cabinet), so far from being hostile to us, was

by no means unhelpful. From all the circumstances it seems legitimate to conclude that the members of the Siamese Government as a whole were not privy to the Japanese invasion and that, however great may have been their previous apprehensions as to the possibility of an advance by Japanese forces against British territory via Siam, many, if not all, of them were deeply shocked by it when it came. Nevertheless, this readiness to yield to Japan only under pressure of *force majeure*, this unwillingness to break relations with ourselves and this disposition to help us so far as the position of affairs might allow—these features characterising initially the attitude of the Siamese Government (or at any rate of some of its members) proved to be extremely short-lived, and were succeeded almost at once by a *volte-face* on the Government's part which brought it into positive collaboration with the Japanese and led to its active participation in hostile measures against us. The reason for this abrupt change, the solution of the riddle (if riddle there be) is to be sought in the conduct at that highly critical juncture of Luang Pibul. By this time he must have made up his mind that Japan was going to be the winner in the war she had decided to wage against us ; it may have needed the actual swift onrush of the Japanese troops, and our own failure to meet it with equal vigour and celerity, to engender that final conviction in him ; or he may already have had an inkling of what the Japanese were about to do ;* but, however that may be, it can be

* I think it unlikely that the Japanese would have been so imprudent as to reveal in advance, even to Luang Pibul, anything like an exact knowledge of their intentions, unless it were at the moment when they were on the very point of carrying them out and when it was so late that a breach of confidence on his part could not have imperilled their successful execution. In order to show the extraordinary degree of secrecy with which the Japanese military authorities invested their plans, I may say that the spokesman of the Japanese Embassy at Bangkok, who visited me shortly before my release from internment, told me that those plans had not been disclosed beforehand even to Japanese consular officers upon the spot, and that the newly appointed Japanese Consul-General at Singapore arrived at that place early in December to take up his duties ignorant of the Japanese attack on Northern Malaya, only to be taken into custody by the Malayan authorities as an enemy alien.

From another source I have also learnt that, so doubtful were the members of the Japanese community at Bangkok of what would happen to them, that many of them took shelter at their Embassy on the night of 7th-8th December, when the Japanese Ambassador presented his ultimatum to the Siamese Government.

[Footnote continued over leaf.]

regarded as certain that, when Luang Pibul returned to Bangkok on the morning of 8th December, he was already willing and determined to support the cause of Japan. What happened after the preliminary stages marked by the Cabinet meeting and by the issue of the official *communiqué* on that day will best be interpreted in the light of a disclosure subsequently made to a Japanese newspaper by Colonel Tamura, who was then the Military Attaché to the Japanese Embassy but who returned some time afterwards to his native country. Colonel Tamura informed this newspaper that the 8th December had been the busiest day in Luang Pibul's life, for he had spent it in working for a military pact with Japan in spite of "pro-British and pro-American elements" in the Cabinet. The above statement, which was reproduced in the *Bangkok Times* of 1st April, 1942, indicates sufficiently that on 8th December Luang Pibul had rallied to the side of Japan. His efforts to bring his colleagues round to a similar frame of mind were only too successful.

The swift and agile *volte-face* just mentioned as having been executed by Luang Pibul and his Government is illustrated by the following series of happenings which occurred after 8th December, 1941.

On 10th December, Luang Pibul broadcast an address to the Siamese public in which he declared that Siam must adapt herself to the world situation and that it would be wrong to row against the current. He went on to make the significant revelation that an offensive and defensive pact with Japan had already been concluded; in other words, the Japanese Ambassador's proposal for an alliance between the two countries which, according to Nai Direck Jayanâma, the Cabinet had declined to entertain on 8th December, had been accepted only two days later. On 12th December, Luang Pibul delivered a second broadcast in which he again mentioned the conclusion of a military alliance with Japan and in which he called upon his fellow-countrymen to show a better disposition towards Japanese troops when meeting them on the road and to endeavour

I mention the above facts in fairness to Luang Pibul, because, if they can be substantiated, they dispose of any suggestion that he was in definite collusion with the Japanese before the very last moment. There is also the statement (for what it may be worth) volunteered to me by a member of the Japanese Embassy during my internment that, at the moment when the Japanese invaded Siam, no agreement had been concluded between them and the Siamese Prime Minister.

to treat them with courtesy and kindness. (Evidently there were already signs of friction between the two Allies, and I may remark that it was necessary for the Siamese Government to issue a number of similar appeals afterwards.) In this same broadcast the Prime Minister made the disingenuous allegation that Great Britain, in the course of her relations with Siam, had deprived the latter of some of her territory, and that in consequence the friendship between the Siamese and the British could not be held to be of a cordial nature.* I am told by one who actually listened to him that Luang Pibul betrayed manifest signs of a guilty conscience when making his broadcasts, for he sought to defend himself against the charge that in acting as he was doing he was behaving like a traitor; it was then that he urged in justification of his new attitude that Siam would benefit by recovering with Japan's help territory which she had been obliged to surrender in the past. Another informant who listened to Luang Pibul on 12th December tells me that he had the grace to admit that Siam was indebted to Britain for having provided facilities for the education of so many of her sons. It is to be observed that in neither of his broadcasts did Luang Pibul make any mention of a declaration of war upon Britain or the United States.

Meanwhile, on 10th December, martial law had been proclaimed throughout the Kingdom. On 21st December, the pact of alliance with Japan, which had already been negotiated in principle, was formally concluded at Bangkok in circumstances of unusual solemnity, for Luang Pibul and the Japanese Ambassador affixed their signatures to it in the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, which is the most sacred of all shrines to Buddhists in Siam. The pact stipulated that, if either of the parties to it should be engaged in an armed conflict with another country, the second party was to side with the other immediately, and to accord to it all possible assistance, whether political, economic or military. The circumstances in which the agreement was concluded were deemed so urgent that it came into force at once upon the day of its signature, no subsequent ratification being required. Even at this stage, however, there was no allusion

* These *résumés* of Luang Pibul's two broadcasts are taken from the *Bangkok Times*, an English-language newspaper formerly in British ownership which the Japanese had just taken over and turned into a noisome organ of propaganda of their own.

to the existence of a state of war between Siam and any of the United Nations, although the Siamese were already providing the Japanese with every facility for the prosecution of their campaign against us, whilst the British, United States and Dutch diplomatic representatives and their staffs, as well as all their nationals in Siam who were of white race, had been interned as from the second week of December. As regards this latter point I would remark that the Japanese military guards placed outside the British Legation had been replaced by Siamese police guards on 16th December, and I understand that a similar change of custodians was effected in the case of the other two Legations also.

Finally, on 25th January, 1942, the Siamese Government took a further step by declaring war upon Britain and the United States as from noon of that day ; but no declaration of war was made upon the Netherlands, although Dutch European nationals were rounded up and interned equally with United States and British subjects of white race.

The reasons advanced by the Siamese Government in an official *communiqué* for going to war with us were of an amazingly puerile and disingenuous nature. In view of the fact that the Japanese were making use of Bangkok and other places in Siam as bases for conducting hostilities against us we had, very naturally, organised a number of bombing raids from the air over Siamese territory, including the capital, in the course of which (as was unavoidable) some non-military installations, as well as military ones, had been unintentionally hit. Luang Pibul pretended dishonestly that these raids constituted persistent acts of aggression in defiance of international law and that, as both British and American aviators were known to have participated in them, the Siamese Government was in consequence obliged to declare the country to be at war with Britain and the United States. On top of this brazen piece of mendacity the official *communiqué* accused us of having attempted to restrict Siam's legitimate activities and to control her in various ways connected with her finances and with her production of rice, tin, rubber and teak. This was sheer nonsense, for we had never sought to control Siamese finance and we had never interfered with her rice trade, whilst British owners of rubber plantations in Siam were very few in number and, as regards teak and tin, the country had benefited very greatly from the

investment of British capital which the Siamese themselves were quite unable to find. Furthermore, far from our having attempted to coerce Siam in the matter of rubber, it was the Japanese who throughout the year 1941 had been urging her very insistently to reserve for them the greater part of her production of that commodity. More ridiculous, if possible, than the allegations against Great Britain were the reproaches which the *communiqué* went on to level against the United States. Not only was Washington blamed for having refused to sanction the delivery of a shipment of aircraft which the Siamese Ministry of Defence had recently bought in America (as if wars were to be fought over such minor issues as that!), but—crowning absurdity of all—the United States was arraigned for having failed to mediate or to assist Siam half a century before, when she was at loggerheads with France in 1893!

In view of the ridiculous excuses thus invented for going to war with two countries which were old and tried friends of Siam, the *communiqué* just quoted can only be held to have set up a record for childish insincerity which must be wellnigh unique in the history of international relationships, and future generations of Siamese will assuredly blush to recall it. The *communiqué* contained also the remarkable statement that, upon the outbreak of war in the Far East, Siam, being an Asiatic country, had concluded an alliance with Japan but had no aggressive intentions towards Britain or the United States. The underlying idea here is, I suppose, that, although the Japanese were waging intensive warfare against us from bases in Siam with the acquiescence of the Siamese Government, we were not to take any retaliatory measures ourselves in so far as Siamese territory was concerned so long as that Government harboured no "aggressive intentions" with respect to us. When we did retaliate, as we were bound to do, and bombed military objectives in Siam which were being used by the Japanese, we were accused of "persistent acts of aggression" against that country, which thereby became entitled to declare itself at war with us! Whoever was responsible for this triumphant piece of logic must either have been very naïve or must have had his tongue in his check.

It may seem that the declaration of war against us made no great alteration in a condition of affairs which had been in existence almost from the first arrival of the Japanese troops.

Yet in certain respects it did make a difference. For example, it enabled the Siamese Government to cancel formally all the pensions of the many British subjects previously in its service, as well as to cancel the concessions granted to various British or Australian companies for the mining of tin or the extraction of teak. Moreover, Siamese troops were now used in active support of the Japanese who were fighting against us, and partial effect was given to the Japanese promise of a "restoration" of territory by the despatch of a Siamese military contingent to occupy the State of Keng Tung. Nevertheless, from the broader standpoint of the United Nations and of the major hostilities which had begun in the Far East, the Siamese declaration of war was an event of little importance. From the point of view of Siam herself, however, it was a piece of signal folly, for, by demonstrating her solidarity and her willing collaboration with our enemies, it must result in her being placed in the dock when the hour of judgment strikes and the United Nations, emerging as victors from the present conflict, address themselves to the task of apportioning blame and punishment to the guilty parties.

As soon as Siam had formally associated herself with the Japanese attack upon us, the mask, of course, was off as far as the Government of Luang Pibul was concerned. Siamese adherence to the "New Order" and to the "Co-Prosperity Sphere" was proclaimed, the puppet Chinese Government at Nanking was recognised, there was a sycophantic exchange of further goodwill missions between Tokyo and Bangkok, and Britain was stigmatised in the Siamese Press and over the wireless as the enslaver of Asiatic peoples, whom the Japanese were freeing from their brutal oppressor with the co-operation of Siam. In tangible proof of this co-operation the Siamese Government assisted the Japanese in making Bangkok a centre for the organisation of a movement in which seditious Indians all over the Far East were invited to participate, and which had for its object the overthrow of British rule in India. Siam's readiness to clasp the hand of her big Japanese brother was further advertised by the conclusion in Toyko of an agreement by virtue of which the tical (the national unit of currency), hitherto based on sterling, was devalued and linked to the yen under conditions very disadvantageous to the Siamese trader. Gradually thereafter the financial and economic control over the whole country

came to be centred in the hands of the Japanese to such a degree that it is safe to say that at the present time Siam is being exploited unscrupulously by them for their own ends. The same sort of thing, no doubt, is happening, and was bound to happen, in all those Far Eastern territories over which Japan has established her domination, and Luang Pibul has been without power to check a process which, as I have stated previously, I believe he was intelligent enough to have foreseen, though he may not have realised the devastating lengths to which it would be carried. The consequence is that the war against ourselves and the United States is now more unpopular with the Siamese people than ever and, if all reports are true, they have learnt to detest the Japanese as they detest no other nation in the world.

CHAPTER XXII

INTERNMENT

SINCE Japan was posing as the protector of all Asiatics in face of Western oppression, I had assumed from the first that our many thousands of Asiatic nationals were not likely to be molested in the event of a Japanese irruption into Siam. The Japanese, indeed, could not afford to destroy, by maltreating these people, the legend which they were thus attempting to create for themselves, and in the event my assumption was proved to have been justified. The Japanese, as soon as they had entered Siam, issued a proclamation assuring all Asiatic subjects of the United Nations that they could continue in their ordinary occupations without fear of interference and that they would not be regarded as enemies provided they did not endeavour to leave the country. In pursuance of this policy business firms owned by all foreign Asiatics were allowed to continue trading, whereas British, American and Dutch commercial houses, other than those in the hands of Asiatics, were closed down by the Japanese after their arrival. At the same time, all white persons of British, United States and Dutch nationality were gradually arrested and, after an interval of makeshifts and of much discomfort, were confined in a civilian internment camp organised for them by the Siamese authorities on the premises of the University of Moral and Political Sciences at Bangkok. Here a total of some 360 persons were confined, exclusive of a small number who, for reasons of old age or of health, were permitted to remain under guard in their own houses. In addition to these there were a few British Europeans from Bangkok who, during the brief period which preceded the general round-up of our white nationals, succeeded in eluding the Japanese and made their way overland into Lower Burma, where they arrived safely after a very arduous journey. The majority of British subjects of white race in the north were able to cross over into the Shan States or into Burmese territory, whilst those resident in the Southern Provinces and stationed at places near the west coast of the Peninsula were most of them picked up and conveyed to Penang by a vessel despatched for the purpose by our naval

authorities. Others in the south who were less favourably situated endeavoured to make their way across the frontier into British territory, but not all of them were successful in doing so.

The civilian internees at Bangkok were from the first in the charge of the Siamese, whereas the diplomats interned in their respective Legations were in Japanese military custody for about a week, when charge over them was transferred to the Siamese Police. Inasmuch as Siam had not then declared war upon us my American colleague and myself were still the duly accredited representatives of our two countries at the Court of Bangkok ; yet we were being kept in rigorous confinement by the very Government to which we were attached—a truly Gilbertian situation, if it had not been fraught with such tragic implications. In point of fact, the replacement of the Japanese soldiers at the gates of the British Legation by Siamese guards was welcomed by us, since there is little doubt that we received from the latter treatment more considerate than we should have experienced at the hands of the former. Not that we met with deliberate discourtesy from the Japanese, but our Siamese custodians showed a degree of regard for us which, in the circumstances, we appreciated not a little. Some of them may have been stupid, or dilatory in attending to our reasonable requests, but upon the whole they were not unsympathetic ; they showed no animus against us, and those of them with whom I spoke myself were invariably respectful and polite. We were held strictly *incomunicado*, though those among us who might need clinical treatment were allowed to proceed under police escort to a neighbouring Siamese hospital, whilst two of our servants went to market each morning, likewise under police escort, to buy provisions for us. It was also open to us to enlist the services of a doctor, who was permitted to visit us when required.

At the beginning the doctors who came to us were Siamese and were most sympathetic and courteous in their treatment of those in need of their good offices, but later on it was exclusively Japanese doctors who were brought to us. I can only suppose that the Japanese military had grown suspicious of the Siamese doctors and were afraid that we might use them as channels of communication with the world outside. Indeed, the Japanese seem never to have trusted the Siamese when it came to communicating with any of the members of the British

community ; thus, although the internees in the civilian internment camp, more fortunate than ourselves, might receive visitors on stated occasions, visits were forbidden from Siamese. Nothing could show more clearly how artificial, so far as concerned the general sentiment, was the new antagonism which was supposed to have sprung up between the Siamese and their former British friends. And I have no doubt that the same thing could be said with respect to the Americans and the Dutch.

Although the Siamese were our immediate custodians, it was, of course, the Japanese who really held the reins and no official of the Siamese Government ever visited us, whilst we were shut up in the Legation, without being accompanied by representatives of the Japanese Army and Embassy. Our Siamese contacts might have been suggestive of the velvet glove, but we were always conscious of the iron hand of Japan inside it. The Swiss Government was now entrusted with the care of British and American interests in Siam and the Consul for Switzerland at Bangkok was indefatigable in his efforts to assist us under very difficult and trying conditions. But he was never allowed to see me alone ; Japanese and Siamese officials were present at all our interviews.

All things considered, we folk in the Legation did not fare so badly, although the rigorous nature of our confinement made it tedious in the extreme.

As I was never allowed to visit the camp in which the great majority of our European nationals, together with Americans and Dutch, were interned, I am not qualified to say much about it. Those who have since been released from it tell me, however, that in all the circumstances, and subject to certain reservations, their treatment was not too bad. They speak well of their Siamese custodians, among whom they observed no signs of animosity or ill will.

Arrangements were ultimately made for the exchange of myself and my staff against the Siamese Minister in London and those members of his staff and other Siamese in the United Kingdom who were willing to go back to a Siam under Japanese domination. (More than half of them refused to do so.) Accordingly, we left Bangkok on 4th August, 1942, on a small Siamese vessel for Saigon, at which port we were taken on board a Japanese repatriation ship which carried us as far as Lourenço Marques, in Portuguese East Africa, in company with our Am-

bassador in Tokyo (Sir Robert Craigie) and his staff and a number of subjects of the United Nations from Japan and China. At Lourenço Marques we all transhipped to another vessel that conveyed us to England. Together with us from Bangkok went the Netherlands Chargé d'Affaires and the members of his staff, and also some forty British subjects from the internment camp. The Americans had been repatriated some little time previously. Lack of shipping accommodation, unhappily, prevented the repatriation of all the British inmates of the internment camp, where there are still nearly two hundred of them in confinement. His Majesty's Foreign Office is making unremitting efforts for the release of these internees also.

My last recollections of Bangkok are touching. When the day for our departure arrived, our passage from the Legation by motor-car to the wharf where our ship was waiting to receive us created something of a sensation. Hundreds of people had lined the approaches to the wharf and many of them raised their hats in salutation to us ; it was in no sense a hostile crowd, it was definitely friendly, and I believe that it was the desire to bid farewell to us, quite as much as idle curiosity, which had brought it together. And on the wharf itself were many Siamese (largely officials) who joined in the farewells with smiles and with every manifestation of goodwill. It was more like a cordial send-off than the shipping away of a band of suspect enemy aliens.

Besides the civilian internment camp at Bangkok, there are now in Siam a number of camps in which British and Dutch prisoners of war from Malaya and elsewhere are being confined. In view of recent revelations as to the harsh treatment which is being accorded to these men, it is only right to point out that the military camps in question are under Japanese, and not under Siamese, control.



CHAPTER XXIII

JUDGMENT

IF the rally of Siam to the side of Japan came as an unpleasant surprise to many people, it is to be remembered that it took place in a general atmosphere of surprise and bewilderment in the Far Eastern theatre of events. The possibility of an attack upon us by the Japanese in South-Eastern Asia had certainly been considered by every one, more particularly after their military occupation of the southern portion of French Indo-China. But what had not been foreseen by anybody was the astonishingly rapid success which attended that attack when it was delivered, a success which was heralded at the outset by the amazing news of the sinking of the British battleship "Prince of Wales" and of the battle cruiser "Repulse". Nor had our friends in the United States foreseen the destruction which the Japanese would be able to work by their lightning assault upon Pearl Harbour. Before we set out to judge the Government of Luang Pibul for its actions it is necessary that we should realise this, for it is only by placing events in Siam at that critical hour against their proper background that we can hope to arrive at a just estimate of their significance.

Let us begin by putting the case against Luang Pibul and his colleagues and then let us enquire what, if anything, can be said in excuse or extenuation of their conduct.

The Siamese Government, I think, started off badly when, as the international situation grew more menacing, it protested loudly to all the world that it was determined to resist foreign aggression coming from any quarter and that Siam would defend her neutrality against any party who might endeavour to violate it. Not once, but repeatedly, was this announcement made in official *communiqués* or in other statements issued with the authority of the Government, and Luang Pibul upon one occasion went still further and declared that, in case of invasion, the Siamese people would pursue the scorched earth policy and destroy all the vital resources of the country rather than allow them to be utilised by the enemy. The public was even told in detail what objects, such as railways, power stations and the

like, would be the first to be rendered useless in case of necessity. Moreover, this repeated insistence by the authorities upon the resolve to oppose aggression was accompanied by a widely spread belief, not specifically endorsed by the Government but voiced without contradiction in the Press, that in the event of Bangkok being threatened by an invader the seat of the administration would be moved to some less vulnerable place in the interior.* Yet at the moment of the Japanese irruption into Siam on 8th December, 1941, despite all the previous fervent protestations of neutrality in face of the possibility of an Anglo-Japanese conflict, despite all the vows which had been registered that aggression from any quarter would be opposed, despite all suggestions that the seat of government should be shifted from Bangkok if the worst came to pass—in spite of all these bold and emphatic pronouncements, when it actually came to the point Luang Pibul and his colleagues capitulated to their country's invaders with scarcely a moment's loss of time. Within half an hour of his return to the capital on the morning of 8th December Luang Pibul ordered the Siamese troops and police who were resisting the Japanese in accordance with his own previous instructions to cease fire. Nor was that all; he consented without demur to the prompt internment of British, United States and Dutch nationals, he arranged with the minimum of delay for the conclusion of an offensive and defensive alliance with Japan and finally, on 25th January, 1942, he was responsible for a formal declaration of war upon Great Britain and the United States, two countries with which Siam had always maintained the most amicable relations and towards which eloquent professions of friendship had only lately proceeded from his mouth. This is, indeed, a formidable indictment; to a great extent it is unanswerable but not, I think, wholly so.

The case which can be put up for the defence would be on the following lines. Let us take first those loudly trumpeted assertions that Siam would defend her neutrality against all comers. The uninstructed may think that they were not genuine and that in making them Luang Pibul's Government was deceiving us and was throwing out a smoke-screen, as it were, behind which it was intriguing against us with the

* I happen to know that the taking of this step had been actually considered by the Cabinet.

Japanese. I do not believe that this was the case. It is characteristic of the Siamese, as of some other people, that they are easily intoxicated by their own rhetoric, and I feel confident that in this instance the great majority of those concerned meant—or, rather, imagined that they meant—what they said. With people of this type words can readily take the place of realities until the inevitable “show down” occurs, and I do not consider that anyone acquainted with the Siamese character was disposed to take these protestations at their full face value at the time when they were made. I, for one, could never convince myself that the Siamese Government would in fact oppose serious armed resistance to a Japanese invasion in the absence of direct military support from ourselves or from the United States. And it is by the absence of that support when the crucial moment arrived that Luang Pibul and his associates, if arraigned, might seek to justify themselves. They might argue that, in announcing their intention to oppose all attempts to violate Siam’s neutrality, they were taking it for granted that, if one side thus acted, help from the other side would be forthcoming. In the event, when it proved to be lacking, the idea of resistance became hopeless and the pledge to oppose an invader devoid of meaning.

I should be ready to accept this as a valid defence in so far as it is based on the undeniable truth that, unless helped from outside, it would have been impossible for the relatively weak Siamese forces to oppose the Japanese troops successfully, and that resistance to them could in that case only have been followed by the complete occupation of the country, by the slaughter of great numbers of its inhabitants and by the loss of even its nominal independence. To have fought the invaders in spite of everything and without hope of success would, no doubt, have been the heroic thing for the Siamese to do, but we must be fair and must admit that this is more than could reasonably have been asked of them. If, then, neither we nor our American allies were in a position to lend them immediate and effective military support, I would submit that we ought not to blame them for the mere fact of yielding to *force majeure* and of not attempting to bar their door to the Japanese. If that presentation of the case be accepted, then I hold that it is not so much the United Nations as the Siamese people itself which is entitled to reproach Luang Pibul and his Government for the empty boast that the neutrality of the country would be defended at all costs; for,

whilst the non-fulfilment of that boast did not influence materially the subsequent course of events, it had at least the effect of making Siam ridiculous (not to use a stronger word) in the eyes of the rest of the world. If I were a Siamese, I should not easily forgive Luang Pibul's party for having shouted "Hands off" to all would-be aggressors and for having then tamely submitted to the first aggressor who came along.

I do not consider, therefore, that we could have blamed Luang Pibul and his associates if, after the Japanese Ambassador had presented his ultimatum on the night of 7th December, 1941, they had followed the example of Denmark in a similar emergency and, whilst not seeking to oppose by force the violation of their country's neutrality, had at least protested against it and, above all, had refused to entertain any idea of collaboration with the invaders. As I have recounted in a previous chapter, that was more or less the attitude which the Siamese Cabinet decided to adopt at its meeting on the morning of 8th December. Unfortunately, Luang Pibul saw to it that that attitude was not preserved for very long, and almost immediately afterwards he put both himself and his colleagues altogether in the wrong by persuading the Cabinet to agree to active co-operation with the Japanese. That was an unpardonable act, and it was made even more unpardonable by the formal declaration of war which followed closely upon it. Luang Pibul and his Government are thus to be condemned, in my view, not so much upon the charge of having admitted the Japanese to their country as upon that of having made them welcome and of having participated in their nefarious acts. By that participation Luang Pibul and his colleagues will be found, as I have said before, to have placed their country in the dock, along with the other criminal nations, when Great Britain and the Powers associated with her in the present war have emerged triumphantly from it and proceed to deal out justice to the guilty parties. Nevertheless, after Siam has been convicted, as convicted she must be, there will still in my opinion be extenuating circumstances which she can plead in mitigation of the sentence to be passed upon her.

We know that the Japanese sought to bribe Siam into coming over to their side by the promise that certain of her "lost territories" would be "restored" to her, but we do not know what menaces they may have employed in bringing about her acceptance of the military alliance which they proffered to her.

They may, for example, have threatened to disband her Army or to put into office a hand-picked quisling Government of their own.

Leaving this possibility aside, however, the Siamese people may attempt to plead that the war against us was never popular with them and that they were not consulted over the decision to embark upon it. Such a plea can be accepted only to a limited extent, since, after all, every people must be responsible in the last resort for the deeds of its own Government. But a much more valid plea for mitigation of sentence will lie to that general atmosphere of surprise and bewilderment to which I have alluded as having pervaded the international scene in the Far East at the time of the Japanese onslaught. Upon this point I will venture to write frankly, at the risk of offending some of my fellow-countrymen who may put themselves to the trouble of reading these pages. Before we cast stones at the Siamese, or at any other Oriental people, for their defection to the side of Japan, let us remember that we are by no means above reproach ourselves. It is an unfortunate fact that we had not merely taught ourselves to believe that we were invincible in the Far East, but that we had taught others to believe it, too. The inhabitants of Burma and Malaya, for instance, trusted to our capacity to defend them against an invader, and, similarly, the Siamese had believed in our ability to frustrate in South-Eastern Asia the arrogant and far-reaching pretensions of Japan. Even the military party in Siam remained up to the end under the spell of our legendary invulnerability and were reluctant to assume that the great Power which had been their country's friend and neighbour for so many generations could be eliminated from the scene by any opponent, least of all by an Oriental one.

And yet that was precisely what happened. In the twinkling of an eye, almost, the Japanese overwhelmed us in Malaya and at Hong Kong, and finally drove us out of Burma after having crippled that portion of the United States Navy which was concentrated at Pearl Harbour. If this appallingly swift series of disasters came as a numbing shock to ourselves, it came as a blow hardly less shattering to the Siamese, who suddenly beheld their accustomed world disintegrating before their eyes and a new firmament being created in which the familiar pole-star of Britain no longer shone. Can we blame them too severely if,

in their extremity of dismay and bewilderment, they gave up the British cause as lost for good and all and turned to Japan, not because they felt drawn to her by ties of sympathy or desired her protection for its own sake, but because she seemed to be the only fixed star left by whose light they could be guided and because they feared her power to destroy them if they did not bend themselves to her will? Let us remind ourselves that the Siamese do not belong to the British race and that they could not be expected in that dark hour to have the same confidence as we ourselves in its destinies, or to share our own conviction as to our final victory over the adversaries who were aligned against us. Let us not forget either that our collapse in the Far East came as a cruel disillusionment to those democrats in Siam who had been pinning their faith to us and who had learnt to regard us as their special friends. Is it too much to say that we had let these people down? I, at least, will not shrink from saying it. It is not for me to attempt to assign reasons for our swift and calamitous defeat at the hands of Japan. I am merely trying to describe objectively the deplorable effect which it could not fail to have upon the Siamese. That effect was discernible at the beginning after our inability to assist them in opposing the invader had been made plain, and it was deepened as the melancholy tale of our successive military reverses was unfolded. Decidedly, when the time arrives for the United Nations to sit in judgment, the Siamese people will have every right to advance the plea which I am myself putting forward here on its behalf, and, if we are honest with ourselves, we shall not be able to disregard it. The same consideration applies, furthermore, not only to the Siamese in general, but also to those members of the Cabinet in particular who used to profess liberal views but who forsook us when the crisis came and went over to the camp of Japan. We may not applaud their conduct, but I myself appreciate their dilemma sufficiently to have no desire to see them pelted with mud.

SECTION VI

LOOKING FORWARD

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FUTURE OF SIAM

THIS is no place in which to discuss the measures which the United Nations are likely to take, when the war in the Far East has been won, to call Siam to account for her co-operation with Japan. Sanctions there will no doubt be, although, as I have endeavoured to show, there is reason for holding that it would be unfair to apportion to her the same degree of guilt as attaches to the instigator of, and major partner in, the crimes to which her Government has caused her to lend countenance. And there will, presumably, also be certain military measures which the United Nations will wish to adopt upon the conclusion of hostilities in South-Eastern Asia and before the signing of the Treaty of Peace ; the discussion of these, too, lies outside the scope of this book. Leaving such considerations aside, the purpose of the present chapter is to enquire what form the future of Siam will most appropriately take after the war, both in her own interests and in those of the United Nations themselves. In approaching that question I deem it reasonable to take up the position that Siam has been sinned against (by Japan) as much as she has sinned against others, and that her future welfare is something which the United Nations cannot afford to ignore. In other words, on grounds of abstract justice Siam should be given a chance to rehabilitate herself, and the United Nations, if only from motives of self-interest, should afford her every help in doing so.

We will consider those motives of self-interest first. They are based principally on the strategic importance which Siam derives from her geographical situation and to which attention has been drawn in the first chapter. The British Empire, and India, Burma and Malaya more specifically, are here involved, whilst French Indo-China and China likewise come into the picture. A friendly Siam will always be a *desideratum* for those

countries and, considerations of strategy apart, an orderly one into the bargain, for political or social unrest among her population is likely to have regrettable repercussions in adjacent territories. In South-Eastern Asia, as everywhere else, human society in its broad outlines and reactions tends increasingly to become indivisible, and a diseased Siam would be capable of infecting the whole body politic in her part of the world. Since orderliness goes hand in hand with contentment and prosperity, the United Nations, and Britain in particular, will be doing no more than help themselves if they assist in her rehabilitation.

The first, and the most obvious, step to be taken is to promote the re-establishment of Constitutional Government. The democratic experiment, which was begun so hopefully in 1932 and was torpedoed soon afterwards by the military faction, must be afforded that opportunity of finally justifying itself which has been denied to it hitherto. There can be no doubt that the majority of the Siamese intelligentsia favour democratic principles. The attitude of the elected half of the People's Assembly has all along proved that to be the case, and the totalitarian heresy has never made much headway outside the circle of the military and of the small group of civilians whom I will be so unkind as to call their jackals. Even among the soldiers there is, or used to be, a certain liberal element, whilst the Navy as a whole has never co-operated enthusiastically with the Army. If the latest reports are well founded, this has become more than ever the case since the Japanese invasion. By helping with the reorganisation, and by contributing to the stability, of democratic institutions in the post-war Siam, the United Nations will thus be assisting in setting up the only form of government which will please both themselves and the greater part of those Siamese who have any knowledge of political affairs. Furthermore, the United Nations have pledged themselves to promote the growth of democratic government in the countries with which they are now at war.

In order to achieve the purpose in view, goodwill on the part of the United Nations will not be enough, for there is one grave difficulty to be foreseen. It may be assumed that, as an initial step, the Allies will wish to see some form of provisional administration set up which will function to the satisfaction of themselves and of the Siamese public, pending the holding of elections to

the Assembly of the People's Representatives. When those elections come to be held, there need be no fear as to the result, for the liberals will undoubtedly sweep the board. It is from the side of the Army and Navy that the difficulty is likely to come.

My readers will have gathered from previous pages that the democratic experiment has been a failure in Siam because there was no valid public opinion at the back of it, because it could have been neither begun nor continued without the armed support of the military and because the latter, coming to realise that all effective power was vested in themselves, proceeded to exercise that power to their own exclusive advantage. Arguing from these premisses, I have elsewhere put forward the conclusion, which I judge to be indisputable, that "in any country where the traditional form of government has been weakened or destroyed, and where there is no effective public opinion to supplement or replace it, the existence of relatively powerful Armed Forces must represent a standing menace to the growth of democratic institutions". If what has happened before is not to happen again after the United Nations have withdrawn from exercising any direct control over Siam, if the danger is to be removed of the Armed Forces once more in the future smothering democratic government, seizing all authority for themselves and relegating liberal statesmen to the wilderness—if these things are to be prevented, then there will be nothing for it but for the United Nations to bring about the disbandment of the Siamese Fighting Services, or at least their reduction to such dimensions that they will be no more than adequate for the maintenance of internal peace and order.

I realise that I am here treading on contentious ground. There are those who hold, not only that the various countries of South-Eastern Asia should be brought as quickly as possible along the path leading to full self-government—a proposition with which few will quarrel—but also that those countries should be made strong in the military sense by the raising of armies with proper equipment which will enable them to defend themselves against aggression. On this latter point I venture to disagree. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and in this instance we have the concrete case of Siam to guide us. If the United Nations mean seriously to assist in the establishment of democratic institutions in the countries of South-Eastern Asia, every one of which is, politically speaking, still in

a backward stage, and in none of which a real public opinion can be said to exist—if the United Nations have that end seriously in view, then I suggest that they will be stultifying themselves by countenancing either the creation or the maintenance of relatively strong standing Armed Forces in any of the territories in question. It will be futile at one and the same time to favour the growth of democratic institutions and to help forge the instrument by which they are likely to meet their doom. What occurred in Siam might just as well take place elsewhere, given more or less identical conditions. And I would raise a further point in this connection, a point which likewise concerns not Siam only but South-Eastern Asia in general. I believe that, once the countries in that area have attained to anything like a full measure of independence, they will be only too prone to become self-assertive and even aggressive as regards their foreign policies. It may be a reaction after years of dependence upon an alien Power, it may be excess of zeal, it may be due to sinful human nature—call the reason what you will, it remains true in my opinion that the Governments of young nations (young in the political sense) are disposed to be militant and, with respect to South-Eastern Asia, we have again the instructive example of Siam to enlighten us. After her political rebirth in 1932, after her disengagement from the system of unequal Treaties in 1937 and 1938, Siamese nationalism became more pronounced than it had ever been before. It is not fantasy to suggest that South-Eastern Asia may one day become the Balkans of the Asiatic continent if the countries situated there are left free to arm at their discretion, and I must confess that I find it difficult to regard with equanimity the prospect of those countries being in time to come all of them fully independent, all of them armed to the teeth and all of them ready to fly at one another's throats!

The argument that powerful standing armies in these small States will be needed for purposes of self-defence has never impressed me. Here again let us take Siam as an example. In 1941, alone among the territories of the south-eastern corner of Asia, if we except the Netherlands East Indies, she was in possession of something approximating to a genuine military establishment of her own. And yet, what useful purpose did it serve in the event? Certainly, it enabled Siam to make a nuisance of herself over the border dispute with French Indo-China, but, when it came to the Japanese invasion, it made

(and in my view could have made) no practical difference at all. When battles are being waged between giants, the contributions of little men do not count for much. The recent history of Siam furnishes an illuminating lesson which advocates of strong armies for small Oriental countries may ponder with advantage. The military system of which some of her leaders had come to be so proud had absorbed a huge proportion of the national income, yet in the end it was powerless to preserve the neutrality and independence of the country, and it had degenerated previously into an instrument by which the new-born urge to democracy was treacherously suppressed. The balance-sheet is a most unequal one.

The case may be otherwise as regards the organisation of local militia forces instead of relatively large standing armies, for use in case of national emergency. That is a different question, and one which need not involve the safety of democratic institutions.

In writing thus I have digressed considerably, but it was necessary to do so in order to validate my opinion that the best thing which can happen for Siam, when the war is over, will be for the United Nations to insist upon the disbandment, or drastic reduction, of her present military establishment. Such a measure need not be wounding to the national pride. On the contrary, the liberals should welcome it as securing for them the only possible atmosphere in which they will be at liberty to work for the realisation of democratic principles upon a permanent basis.

It would, of course, be a mistake to assume that a return to constitutional methods of government in Siam will mean at once the establishment of a democratic *régime* to the full extent. That was not the case even in the years following immediately upon the *coup d'état*; and at the outset there must be some guiding and controlling authority, which will protect the country against the dangers of ignorance and intemperate enthusiasm on the part of the younger generation, and which will at the same time ensure that progress is made in the right direction as and when the people become ready for it. This purpose was achieved after the revolution by keeping effective power in the hands of the "promoters" and we have seen that, *faute de mieux*, this expedient succeeded reasonably well for a time. Whatever the nature of the controlling authority in the

post-war Siam may be, it will be obliged to continue for a period the withholding, as in the past, of certain popular liberties the enjoyment of which is considered indispensable in more advanced democracies.

In addition to the all-important question of restoring true Constitutional Government after the hurly-burly of the war and its aftermath is over, I would submit that the United Nations will do well to encourage, within the limits of the reasonable and possible, those legitimate national aspirations of the Siamese in the economic and other spheres to which allusion has been made in previous pages. Siam's claims to regulate immigration and the education of the young are justifiable in themselves, if the measures taken with that view are not oppressive and are enforced without any tendency to racial discrimination. So also with her desire to control her own national economy and to secure for her people a due share in the commerce of the country. In this regard, which concerns British interests closely, I would pay a tribute to the British mercantile community in Siam, which, so far from proving obstructive in principle to the aspirations of the new *régime*, had adopted a sympathetic attitude towards them and had shown readiness to collaborate with the Government in the implementing of its policy, provided that the measures adopted were not too abrupt and were not unjust in their nature.

In fine, it should be the task of the United Nations to help in creating a Siam free in the true sense of the word, but at the same time without aggressive designs and with a due respect for the interests of all her neighbours—a Siam in which chauvinism will not be mistaken for patriotism and in which the energies of her Government will be concentrated upon the work of shaping a properly democratic State and of improving, morally and materially, the lot of her people. For the latter purpose foreign capital will still be required, though, as in the case of adjacent countries which have hitherto been "colonial territories", the rewards which it seeks may have to be calculated on a basis somewhat more favourable than in the past to the needs of the local Government and population.

If the propositions which I have here advanced are not rejected, I suggest that it should be the part of Britain, more than of any other country, to assist in carrying them out. If Britain has been the Power which in modern times counted

for most in Siam up to the date of the Japanese invasion, there is good reason to hold that she is likewise fitted to undertake the rôle of "next friend" in the future. Not by compulsion in any form nor by the mere fact of geographical propinquity so long as we continue to be responsible for the defence of Burma and Malaya, but rather by force of tradition backed by the free choice of the Siamese themselves. They have known us intimately for close upon a century, and any lingering suspicion of a desire for territorial acquisition on our part which may still remain with them will be dispelled once and for all by the pursuance of our declared policy of hastening the progress towards autonomy of all the colonial regions in our care. As one who has spent so many of the best years of his life in Siam, I look forward to the day when the habitual friendly relations between her and Britain will be not merely restored, but will be strengthened and maintained on a firmer basis than before. I know that, in the dark days which have followed upon the Japanese incursion into their country, many Siamese have been turning towards Britain in their hearts as the quarter from whence cometh their salvation. Let us hope that that consummation will not be too long delayed.

The arguments just adduced are, I recognise, largely of a sentimental nature in so far as the Siamese are concerned. In the next chapter I will develop reasons of a more practical kind which should make for close association between Siam and the British Empire as being in the best interests of Siam herself.

THE PROBLEM OF MILITARY SECURITY

If present indications are not belied, South-Eastern Asia after the war will present a picture of a number of small countries, of which one—Siam—will continue in that state of independence which she always enjoyed before her present domination by the Japanese, whilst the others will be approaching the realisation for themselves of a similar state as rapidly as they can show their capacity for taking advantage of it. But, even when that ideal has been attained, it is self-evident that none of these countries will be able to stand upon their own feet and to maintain their independence without support from outside. If they are not to be swallowed up again by some stronger invading Power like Japan, if their continued and effective freedom is to be assured, they must be placed under the protection, however well disguised, of some organisation, or of some Power or group of Powers, strong enough to shield them and to ward off aggressors in case of necessity.

Up to the close of 1941 the various colonial territories here in question were, of course, protected by their association with the respective Western Powers under whose guidance and control they were placed. Burma and Malaya could thus look to Britain for their safeguarding against external enemies, Indo-China could look to France, and the fate of the Netherlands East Indies was bound up with that of Holland and was secure so long as Holland was not herself attacked. Siam alone was upon a different footing, for, until Japan came upon the scene, her independence was guaranteed by the balance of power between her two great neighbours, Britain and France. So far as Siam is concerned, the former condition of affairs has disappeared for good, whereas, upon the other hand, it may be forecast with confidence that, when the war is over, Britain will still be responsible for the protection of Malaya and Burma, and that the Netherlands East Indies will continue their association with Holland in that form of equal partnership as a member of the Dutch Realm which Her Majesty the Queen of the Netherlands has recently promised in a royal proclamation. (Of the

future of French Indo-China it is too soon to speak.) No similar guarantee exists, however, in the case of Siam, which in that respect will still remain unique, albeit in a distinctly unfavourable sense, inasmuch as the old balance of power as between Britain and France has been destroyed and is unlikely to be restored. Siam had hoped to see it replaced by a new balance as between Britain and Japan, but that hope has been falsified. Too weak, as she must prove, to maintain her liberty unaided, to what quarter is she to turn for protection?

No doubt it will occur to many, if not to most, people that the desired guarantee for Siam, as well as for her neighbours, will most suitably be furnished by some kind of world organisation aiming at world-wide security which the United Nations will establish at the end of the war and which will provide adequate machinery for safeguarding the liberties of all weak nations, wherever they may be. That would be the ideal solution. But can we be quite sure that it will be reached in the near future? Some kind of world organisation will certainly be formed and the United Nations have signified their adherence to the principle of setting it up, but, if and when in being, will it function to the extent of securing absolute safety against aggression to every country? Assuredly no individual nation can afford at the present stage to "bank" upon such a thing, and it is to be noted that none of the major Powers among the United Nations would seem to contemplate disarmament for themselves on the strength of the potentially beneficent functions to be exercised by any coming world organisation. On the contrary, many voices can be heard in Britain to-day exhorting the people never again to allow this country to be so denuded of armaments as to provoke another attack such as we are now repelling from Germany and Japan. I would submit that this view is not cynicism but common sense, and that it would be folly for any country to neglect making adequate dispositions for its own safety when the war is over, irrespective of the possibility (for the realisation of which we all hope) that a world organisation will one day make aggression impracticable between all the nations upon earth. This being so, Siam, if she is wise, will not rely exclusively upon any successor to the League of Nations for her security, but will seek something more specific, by which I mean something of regional, rather than of world-wide, application.

Suggestions have been made in more than one quarter of late that the various countries included within the pale of the British Empire should institute regional defence schemes of their own looking to the future, and that one of them should be applicable to the region of the South-West Pacific. In an interesting study entitled "The Future of South-East Asia",* Mr. K. M. Panikkar has advocated recently the formation of one such scheme to embrace Britain, India and Burma, and also Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies. In making this suggestion he contemplates a free India, a free Burma and ultimately a free Malaya, as well as a Netherlands India in free association with Holland, and he adduces some powerful arguments in support of his suggestion. To this grouping, which appears to me logical and practicable, and in which the major partners would be Britain and India, I would advocate that Siam should join herself.

It is, indeed, to the West rather than towards the East that Siam can look with most confidence for her future safety. In saying this I am disregarding the United States, in whose disinterestedness the Siamese have always reposed great faith, but which, in my view, is scarcely likely to participate actively in any regional arrangements, as distinct from dispositions of wider scope, for the protection of South-Eastern Asiatic countries. Excluding, again, Russia, whose interests hardly extend so far south, there are only two major Powers with which Siam has to reckon in East Asia. One of them is Japan, which, it goes without saying, does not enter into consideration for the purpose which we are discussing, whilst the other is China. And it is inconceivable that Siam should look to China as being the special guarantor of her liberties. On this point it will be advisable to indulge in a little plain speaking in view of well-meant but misguided suggestions that after the war Siam should become a Chinese "responsibility". It should never be forgotten that, for the reasons set forth in Chapter XIII, China is held in no little distrust by the Siamese, as, indeed, also by the peoples of neighbouring countries like Malaya and Burma. No one will deny that it is desirable that the friendliest relations should be cultivated between China and Siam, and it is clear that a good understanding between them will make for the advantage of them both. But "responsibility" is another

* George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., London, 1943.

matter, and any such notion is bound to be received with the utmost aversion by the Siamese, who would unquestionably never consent to it of their own free will. A correct perception of the Siamese attitude towards China is essential for any one who wishes to understand the problem which Siam presents or who is desirous of her future welfare. Chinese "protection" would mean a permanently discontented Siam and a consequent menace to the tranquillity of South-Eastern Asia.

From the direction of the West, however, Siam should have nothing to fear. An independent India is not likely to act oppressively towards Siam, though I have heard the fear expressed in some Siamese circles that she might do so if the occasion arose. But this fear would be allayed by the inclusion of Britain as a presiding and balancing factor in the suggested combination, which would be a voluntary one on the part of all concerned and which Siam would be free to join or not, as she pleased.

I will not essay the rather invidious task of dotting the "i's" and suggesting what precise form the proposed understanding between Siam and the territories of the British Empire which I have mentioned should take, but I have in mind something which would imply a promise to Siam of protection against aggression from other quarters, a promise in return for which she would, naturally, be asked to make certain concessions herself, and I am envisaging a period in the future subsequent to the operation of any sanctions or other arrangements imposed upon her after the termination of hostilities. I am thus now taking a long-term view of Siam's future. It may be urged against my suggestion, which involves specifically the question of military security, that I have recommended the elimination, or wholesale reduction, of the present Siamese military establishment and that I regard with apprehension the creation of comparatively large standing armies in any of the countries of South-Eastern Asia. I do not see that this need invalidate my view. A local militia could, as I have suggested in the previous chapter, be devised which might help to meet a national emergency without constituting an ever-present threat to democratic government. And, in any event, it looks as though in the future the armaments in the possession of the major Powers will be the sole effectual guarantee of peace.

I hold it to be incontrovertible that, if Britain and India (and also Burma and Malaya) cannot afford to disinterest

themselves in the fate of Siam, it is no less true that Siam cannot afford to disinterest herself in the fate of those countries or in the continued existence of Britain as an Oriental Power. The traditional foreign policy of Siam, which used to consist in playing off one great Power against another, is no longer applicable ; she must now seek a new policy and a definite orientation, which will best be towards Britain and those countries near to herself which are comprised within the framework of the British Empire. Whichever way one looks at it, whether from the standpoint of sentiment or of self-interest, Britain is indicated as being the Power which in the post-war world, no less than in the world which preceded it, is going to mean most for Siam.

I will conclude this chapter with a reference to the suggestion, which is being widely discussed, that a Regional Council should be formed by the nations interested, under the ægis of the coming world-wide organisation, as an instrument for preserving security and order in the Pacific Zone. I think it probable that some such council will be created and that, in addition to such major Powers as Britain, the United States and China, the countries of South-Eastern Asia, including Siam, will be represented on it. There is, I consider, no reason why the defence group which I have just been contemplating should not exist side by side with an organisation of this nature, more especially since it is in my personal opinion improbable that the latter would exercise any great influence as regards security viewed from the purely military standpoint, unless and until the supervising world organisation itself developed into a practical instrument for doing so. The Regional Council could, nevertheless, operate usefully with respect to the countries of South-Eastern Asia in such spheres as that of economics and the distribution of raw materials, as well as in the settlement of disputes which might arise between them.

THE PROBLEM OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

ONE of the chief among the problems with which an international body such as a Regional Council for the Pacific Zone would suitably deal would be that of economic, as distinguished from military, security for the various South-Eastern Asiatic territories.

All of the territories in question are mainly exporting countries, sending to purchasers abroad agricultural produce such as rice, rubber, tea, sugar, coffee or teak, or mineral products such as tin or oil, and importing comparatively small quantities of foreign merchandise in return. This export trade has been developed to such an extent as to diminish the production in some of the countries mentioned of the foodstuffs requisite for the sustenance of the indigenous population, with the result that Malaya, for example, has come to be far from self-supporting in that regard. Moreover, the expansion of the export industries, entailing as it does the employment of so great a proportion of the available labour supply for their prosecution, has in some cases had the effect of placing a large section of the working class at the mercy of the prices for the various natural products concerned which may happen to be ruling in the world market at any given moment. In times of slump these unfortunate people may thus suffer from a serious reduction of their earnings, or from actual unemployment, through the force of circumstances altogether beyond the control of their Government or of themselves. To remedy this state of affairs, economic experts interested in the Far Eastern and other tropical regions are stressing the need, in such territories as we are considering, for taking steps to ensure that in each of them the production of foodstuffs shall be maintained at a level which will suffice to meet local requirements, and they are also emphasising the necessity for creating local industries which will be capable of producing at least a part of those manufactured articles which have hitherto almost exclusively been imported from abroad. By the adoption of these methods a double purpose will be served. Fewer of the population will be engaged in employment exposed to the fluctuation of foreign markets, and the country will at the same

time be assured both of an adequate supply of food and of a certain quantity of manufactured goods in the event of world-wide disturbances which might prevent the importation of vital commodities from outside sources. This policy of stimulating the production locally both of foodstuffs and of manufactured articles seems to be recognised as essential to-day by most students of tropical affairs and is in process of acceptance as such by the various colonial Powers themselves. Not that there is desire for the wholesale industrialisation of countries whose natural resources must always render them predominantly agricultural ; but a degree of industrialisation is judged to be requisite sufficient to provide a reasonable measure of economic security in times of emergency.

Towards the attainment of these objectives a Pacific Regional Council could render valuable help, if only in an advisory capacity and as a centre for co-ordinating the activities of the countries of South-Eastern Asia among themselves. But, as regards Siam more specifically, it may be remarked that, whilst the adoption of a policy of industrialisation to a limited extent is desirable, the necessity does not arise for augmenting the cultivation of articles of food, since reliance may always be placed upon the rice crop to satisfy the basic needs of the population. What is needed in the case of Siam is not so much an increase in the gross production, with a view to export, of foodstuffs, as an addition to their variety. In the past the staple crop has been rice, upon the export trade in which the prosperity of the country, that is to say, its maintenance above mere subsistence level, still mainly depends. In view of the disadvantage of thus having all of its eggs in one basket, the Siamese Government has been turning its attention of late to encouraging the growth of exportable crops other than rice, such as cotton, tobacco and soya beans. It is too early to say what degree of success is likely to attend such efforts as these, though it is safe to assume that rice will always remain the principal crop in a region so well suited for its cultivation as the central part of Siam.

Over and above the issue of economic security, a Regional Council for the Pacific Zone could concern itself usefully with the question of raising the low (and in some cases very low) standard of living normally prevailing among the working classes in South-Eastern Asia, equally with tropical regions in other

parts of the world. On this point it may be agreed that little purpose would be served by introducing Western ideas of comfort to the tropical labourer. The application of those ideas would be neither desirable nor appropriate in countries where so little need be spent on clothing, where food is, comparatively speaking, so cheap and where provision against cold weather has not to be made through the acquisition of fuel. The working man in the tropics can live comfortably on very much less than his counterpart in colder climates, and we should be doing him an ill service if we were to disturb his equanimity by implanting in him tastes and inclinations likely to impair that faculty in him for simple contentment, and for the tranquil enjoyment of life, which I hold to be an enviable quality and the possession of which makes him more fortunate, perhaps, than the majority of mankind. This does not mean that things should be left as they are with him and that no attempt should be made to raise his standard of living at all. On the contrary, I think that it does call for improvement, more especially in those areas where the pressure of population is greatest, but it would be unwise to aim at furnishing the labourer in the tropics with more than he can assimilate. In his present stage of development, although he may benefit by a reasonable augmentation of his wages, he stands to benefit equally, if not more, through the increased provision by the State of such social amenities as facilities for education or for the prevention and cure of disease. To take once more the individual case of Siam, where the pressure of population is not felt as yet, and where the standard of living is in consequence higher than in certain parts of the Netherlands East Indies or of French Indo-China, what is more particularly needed is the relief of the peasant cultivator from the burden of debt which he has accumulated, largely, it must be admitted, owing to his own improvidence. For some time past the Siamese authorities have been trying to find a solution of this difficulty through the remission of taxation and through the establishment of co-operative credit societies and agricultural banks.

POSTSCRIPT

IF it may be taken for granted that, after the war, the colonial Powers concerned will assist in the attainment of full self-government by all of the countries in South-Eastern Asia, it may equally be presumed that the objective will be the realisation by them all of autonomy upon democratic lines. For the democratic stock will have risen all the world over with the defeat of Germany and Japan, and the United Nations, as openly professed democratic Powers, are bound to favour in principle the establishment of popular institutions everywhere. It does not follow, however, that any of the peoples here in question will in practice prove capable of governing themselves according to democratic ideals. It is to be remembered that they have had no real experience of the working of a democratic system of government, that they are accustomed only to the authoritarian method of rule and that, prior to the establishment of Western ascendancy, they were all of them subject to absolute monarchs, to despots who wielded unlimited power. It is certain that the democratic experiment must be tried with them, for the times demand it, but the creation of a fully-fledged popular State is not a thing which can be accomplished easily, and the event alone can show how far in their case the attempt will succeed. The only specific example which we have to guide us here, the one furnished by Siam, does not help us very much since the democratic effort launched in that country was never given a fair chance of making good. It may turn out that the authoritarian system of government will prove to be the only one suited to these populations, and this applies to Siam no less than to her neighbours. It is not all European peoples, let alone Asiatic ones, which take readily to democracy, as the recent case of Germany demonstrates.

If democracy is tried, and if in the event, however gradually the experiment may have been conducted, it fails in the territories with which we are dealing, then the question arises as to what is likely to follow afterwards. Either general chaos or, alternatively, a return to the system of authoritarian government, probably by an individual despot or dictator. The second alternative would be in line with past tradition, and it is to be

observed that, when the constitutional experiment collapsed in Siam, the government passed for all practical purposes into the hands of a single man. Should chaos set in, it is to be presumed that the Great Powers most interested would feel compelled to intervene, in which case history would be repeating itself. On the other hand, the individual despot, if he succeeded in maintaining internal order and fulfilled the nation's obligations towards other countries, would most probably be left in peace and foreign Powers would content themselves with saying that, after all, every people is blessed or cursed with the Government that it deserves. This, of course, is guess-work. It is for Siam and her neighbours to make a success of the democratic experiment once a real chance of starting it is afforded to them. One trusts sincerely that it will be found to work reasonably well. But one cannot be quite sure. Still, there are certain grounds for hope.

This book had only just been completed when the news was received that Luang Pibul and his Government had resigned, towards the end of July, 1944, as a result of the rejection by the People's Assembly of two bills presented to it for *ex post facto* approval. The Assembly not only declined to accept either of these two measures, but further censured the Government for having already taken action upon them without its previous consent. This time the resignation of the Cabinet was a genuine one, and a new Government has been formed at the head of which is, *mirabile dictu*, neither Luang Pibul himself nor any other soldier, but the liberal statesman Luang Kovid Abhaiwongs who, as stated in Chapter XVII, is a close friend of Luang Pradist and had previously quarrelled with Luang Pibul over a question involving the Presidency of the Legislature. It is a remarkable fact that, among the eight other members of Luang Kovid's Cabinet whose names are known, there is not one who is a soldier with the exception of Phya Phahol, who becomes a Minister without portfolio but who has never shown himself to be a militarist. Of the remainder three are naval officers, one of them being Vice-Admiral Luang Sindhu Songgramjaya, whilst the veteran Chao Phya Sri Dharma Dhibes, a moderate and a non-partisan, is the new Minister of Justice. The new Minister of Foreign Affairs is the equally moderate and non-partisan Phya Sri Sena and three out of the eight are professed liberals. If the appointments here mentioned are representative

of the Government of Luang Kovid as a whole, then they are indicative of a notable change in the prevailing political atmosphere in Siam. On the face of it, they suggest the collapse (temporarily at least) of the militarist faction headed by Luang Pibul.

How this sudden defeat of the hitherto all-powerful military party became possible is a question which, in the absence of fuller information, it is not easy to answer. But we know that for some time previously Luang Pibul had been growing increasingly unpopular with the great body of educated Siamese owing to the arrogant way in which he asserted his authority and, if all reports are true, he had come to betray a distinct tendency towards megalomania. It may well be that he had gone so far with his arrogance as to antagonise not only the liberals and the moderates, but the Navy as well, whose relations with the Army have always been delicate and often characterised by mutual animosity. It is even conceivable that Luang Pibul may have lost some of his supporters among the soldiers ; it seems clear, at any rate, that he has just suffered the greatest reverse of his political career. At the same time there has been a successful reassertion of themselves by the liberals and a belated vindication by the Legislature of its rights as a constitutional body. To that extent the formation of the new Cabinet is to be welcomed from the standpoint of the United Nations.

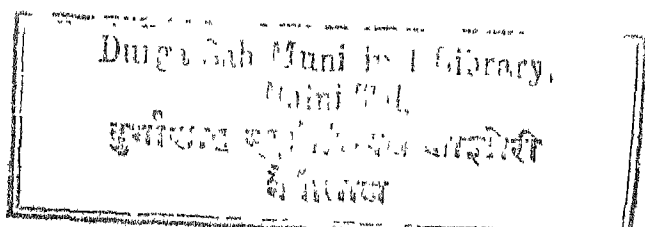
It would be unsafe, however, to conclude from what has now happened that we are witnessing a genuine and lasting revival of that liberal and constitutional State which came into being in 1932, and was subsequently overlaid and smothered by Luang Pibul and his friends. There is always a possibility of their staging a come-back. Furthermore, it looks as though the defeat of the military faction grouped around Luang Pibul could not have been effected without the co-operation of the Navy, which is always in a position to bring pressure to bear upon the Government of the day by the mere threat of bombarding the capital from its warships anchored in the Bangkok River. It remains true that democratic institutions will, in fact, never be safe in Siam so long as there exist in that country strong standing armed forces, be they military or naval, without a valid public opinion to control them.

It is an interesting question why the Japanese should have allowed Luang Pibul, their quisling *par excellence*, to vacate the

scene and to be replaced by one whose liberal views can scarcely have endeared him to them. The new Government is reported to have expressed its intention of continuing its association with Japan and of discharging the national obligations towards her incurred by Treaty, but in the circumstances in which Siam finds herself to-day Luang Kovid and his colleagues could not very well have taken up any other attitude. It may be that the Japanese—who, of course, control the national affairs of Siam in the last resort—are reluctant to ride the Siamese with too tight a rein just now. It may be that, feeling their position in South-Eastern Asia precarious in face of increasing pressure from ourselves and the U.S.A., they prefer to ease the situation for themselves in Siam by allowing to the local Government a wide latitude in purely domestic affairs, provided they can go on directing the policy of the country in the military and economic spheres. And it is to be remembered that the pro-Japanese Luang Sindhu Sougramjaya is a member of the new Cabinet, in which he holds the portfolio of Defence. Opposition from him and from the Navy to Luang Pibul does not imply opposition to Japan, any more than it need imply wholehearted and enduring support for the preservation of democracy and constitutionalism. Meanwhile, the Japanese are trying desperately to make the best of a not very good case by contending that the new Government at Bangkok is no less friendly to them than was its predecessor.

All things considered, whilst the formation of Luang Kovid's Cabinet may be regarded as being of good augury, it will be unwise at the present early stage to cherish undue optimism in respect of it or to assume that its effects will necessarily be as beneficent or as lasting as might be hoped.

Immediately after the resignation of Luang Pibul's Government Prince Aditya resigned from the office of President of the Council of Regency. As the Council consisted at that time of only two members, himself and Luang Pradist, his resignation had the effect of leaving the latter in the position of sole Regent in the absence of King Ananda Mahidol.



INDEX

A

- Absolute Monarchy—
 - Former system of, 21, 32, 33
 - Suppressed in 1932, 76-81
- Aditya Dib-abha, Prince, 80, 101, 168
- Administrative system, 21-23
- Advisers, foreign, 19, 37, 38, 54, 68, 98
- Air Force, 98, 99
- Alorstar, 9
- America (see under U.S.A.)
- Amusements, 25
- Ananda Mahidol, King, 20, 35, 48, 80, 89
- Angkor, 12, 14, 15
- Annam, 14, 59, 60
- Anti-Foreign Feeling (see under Xenophobia)
- Anuvatana, Prince, 80
- Architecture, 28
- Area of Siam, 7
- Army, 91, 98, 99, 105, 167
- Art, 27, 28
- Assembly of the People's Representatives (see under People's Assembly)
- Ayuthia—
 - Capture by Burmese in 1568, 15
 - Destruction by Burmese in 1767, 16
 - Foundation of, 14

B

- Bangkok—
 - Foundation of, 17
 - Population of, 7
- Battambang, 18, 59, 60, 111, 118, 129
- Belgium, 37, 40, 54
- Bhanurangsi, Prince, 46, 47
- Bidyalankarana, Prince, 109
- Birabongse, Prince, 47, 109, 110
- Bovoradej, Prince, 80
- Britain and Siam—
 - Abandonment of right of evocation from Siamese tribunals, 55, 56
 - Anglo-French agreements of 1896 and 1904 respecting Siam, 60, 61
 - Anglo-Siamese relations consistently friendly, 57, 58, 123-125
 - Anglo-Siamese relations under Luang Pibul, 96
 - Britain a pivotal point of Siam's foreign policy, 61

Britain and Siam—

- Britain most qualified to assist in rehabilitation of Siam, 155, 156
- Britain versus Japan in Siam, 122-127
- British advisers, 37, 38, 54, 98
- British community, 40
- British influence before and after the absolute monarchy, 95
- British interests, predominance of, 53, 54
- Burney Treaty of 1826, 53
- Cession by Japan to Siam of six British-protected States, 114, 115
- English factories at Ayuthia and Patani, 16, 53
- Gloucester, H.R.H. the Duke of—
 - Siamese decoration for, 66
- Goodwill Mission to India, Burma, the Straits Settlements and Australia, 66, 106
- Internment of British Legation staff, 131, 132, 136, 140-143
- Internment of white British nationals, 136, 140-143, 145
- Japanese designs menace Britain, 5
- Malay Peninsula, Siamese claims in, 57, 58, 112-115
- Military security, suggested co-operation of Siam with British Empire, 159, 160
- Strategic importance of Siam for British Empire, 9, 10, 150, 151
- Students sent to Britain, 54, 93, 94, 95
- Suspensions of Britain felt by new régime and their removal, 92, 93
- Treaty concluded by Captain Burney in 1826, 53
- Treaty of 1855, 53
- Treaty of 1909, 57, 58
- Treaties of 1925, 55
- Treaty of 1937, 55
- Treaty of Non-Aggression of 1940, 56
- War, declaration of war on Britain and U.S.A., 136, 137, 138, 145, 147
- British Council, 94
- Buddhism (see also under Religion), 11, 28, 29, 119
- Burma—
 - Capture of Ayuthia by Burmese, 15
 - Destruction of Ayuthia by Burmese, 16
 - Wars between Burma and Siam, 15-17

C

Cambodia, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, 59, 60, 118, 119, 120, 124
 Chakrabongse, Prince, 46
 Chakri, Chao Phya, 17
 Chakri Dynasty, 17, 100
 Chakri, Royal House of—
 Services to the State, 48, 49
 Loss of influence after *coup d'état*, 81
 Chantaboon, 60
 Characteristics of the Siamese, 29-31
 Chauvinism, 51, 97, 100, 111-116, 120
 Chiangmai, 8, 15, 16
 China and Siam—
 Bitterness caused by Siamese restrictions, 74
 Chinese community, 13, 70, 71, 72
 Chinese hold over trade in Siam, 70, 71, 72, 74
 Chinese population, increase in, 70
 Chinese residents mostly born in Siam, 70
 Chinese tendency to segregation, 71, 72
 Claim of Chinese Government to protect all Chinese residents, 71, 72, 76
 Conflict between Siamese and Chinese laws of nationality, 73
 Distrust of Chinese policy felt by Siamese, 159
 Early intercourse between China and Siam, 70
 Economic nationalism in Siam and its consequences, 73, 74
 Immigration, restrictions on, 73
 Luang Pibul and the Chinese question, 96
 Persecution of Chinese, unfounded allegation as to, 74, 75
 Republic of China, establishment of, and repercussions in Siam, 2
 Schools, Siamese control over, 73, 74
 Superiority of Chinese over Siamese as traders, 74
 Thai migrations from China, 12
 Treaty relations between China and Siam, reasons for absence of, 75, 76
 Cholera, 42
 Chula Chakrabongse, Prince, 46, 47, 109, 110
 Chulalongkorn, King, 19, 21, 22, 23, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 40, 45, 46, 48, 49, 91
 Climate of Siam, 8
 Communications, 8, 9, 10, 26, 40, 41

Constitutional Government—

Capacity of peoples of S.-E. Asia for, 165, 166
 Constitution promulgated in 1932, 78, 79
 Constitution suspended and restored in 1933, 79
 Constitutional *régime* successful under Phya Phahol, 82, 83
 Limits set to constitutional *régime*, 83, 84, 85, 154, 155
 Military autocracy established under Luang Pibul, 87, 88, 89
 Necessity for safeguarding democratic institutions after the war, 151, 152
 Plots against constitutional *régime*, 86
 Reasons for collapse of Constitutional Government, 89-91
 Recent apparent restoration of Constitutional Government, 166-168
 Counter-revolution of 1933, 80
Coup d'état of June 24th, 1932, 77-81
 Craigie, Sir Robert, 143
 Culture, 27, 28

D

Damrong, Prince, 47
 Dances, 27, 28
 Dan-Sai, 60
 Defence establishment, 98, 99
 Democracy (see under Constitutional Government)
 Denmark, 37, 40
 Devawongse, Prince, 47
 Dhamrong Navasvasti, Luang, 106
 Dhonburi, 17
 Direck Jayanâma, Nai, 106, 107, 129, 130, 131, 132
 Drama, 27, 28
 Dvaravati, 12

E

Economic nationalism, 97, 98, 155
 Economic security, problem of, 162, 163, 164
 Education—
 Chinese schools, 73, 74, 155
 Progress under constitutional *régime*, 82
 Students sent abroad, 34, 54, 93, 94, 95
 Electoral law, 83
 Ex-territorial system, 1, 2, 38, 39, 55, 56

- F
- Finance—
 Financial position of Siam, 9, 34, 138, 139
 Financial system, reform of, 83
 Food-stuffs, production of, 162, 163
 Foreign communities, 40
 Foreign policy of Siam—
 Based on balance of power, 50, 61, 95, 96, 122-127
 Need for a new foreign policy, 158-161
 France and Siam—
 Anglo-French agreements of 1896 and 1904 respecting Siam, 60, 61
 Boundary dispute over French Indo-China, 117-121
 Cession of territory by Siam to France after 1893 incident, 59, 60
 France a pivotal point of Siam's foreign policy, 61
 Franco-Siamese relations deteriorate after collapse of France in 1940, 123
 French advisers, 37, 98
 French community, 40
 French contacts with Ayuthia, 16
 French Roman Catholic missionaries, 40, 119
 French trade with Siam, 61
 Hostilities along border of French Indo-China, 119
 Incident of 1893, 3, 59, 60
 Irredentist feeling against France, 51, 60, 96, 111, 120
 Luang Pibul and Franco-Siamese relations, 96
 Siamese Government refuses to ratify Treaty of Non-Aggression, 118
 Siamese students sent to France, 54, 96
 Suspensions of France felt by new *régime* and their removal, 92, 93
 Territorial disputes, 59
 Territorial readjustments effected by Convention of 1904 and Treaty of 1907, 60
 Treaty of 1856, 59
 Treaty of Non-Aggression of 1940, 56, 118
 French Indo-China (see also under France and Siam)—
 Boundary dispute with Siam, 117-121
 Nationalist movement in, 2
 Future of Siam, 150-156
- G
- Germany, 8, 9, 37, 40, 54
- H
- Haripunjaya, 12
 History of Siam, 14-20
 Hygienic conditions, 42
- I
- Immigration restrictions, 73, 74, 155
 India—
 British Indian community, 40
 India the ultimate source of Siamese religion, art and culture, 12, 13, 26, 27
 Military security, suggested co-operation of Siam with Britain and India, 159, 160
 Nationalist movement in India, 2
 Seditious Indian movement based on Bangkok, 138
 Indo-China (see under French Indo-China)
 Industrialisation, need for a degree of, 162, 163
 Industries of Siam, 24
 Internment of British, U.S.A. and Dutch nationals, 131, 132, 136, 140-143, 145
 Italy, 37, 40
 Iyeyasu Minamoto (Japanese Shogun), 62
- J
- Japan and Siam—
 Aggressive designs of Japan, 2, 5, 63
 Attack by Japan on British and American possessions, 3
 Britain versus Japan in Siam, 122-127
 Cession by Japan to Siam of six British-protected states, 114, 115
 Chauvinism in Siam encouraged by Japanese, 67, 114, 124
 Chichibu, Prince—Siamese decoration for, 66
 Early contacts between Japan and Siam, 62
 French Indo-China, Japanese mediation in boundary dispute with Siam, 120
 Invasion of Siam by Japanese, 128-130
 Japan and the Kra Canal, 68, 69
 Japanese advisers, 68

Japan and Siam—

Japanese ambassador appointed to Bangkok, 67

Japanese attitude towards Siamese Government formed in July 1944, 167, 168

Japanese community, 40, 67, 68

Japanese consular representation, 68

Japanese efforts to gain Siamese sympathy, 63-65

Japanese exports to Siam, increase in, 63

Japanese influence, growth of, 63-67

Japanese propaganda, limited success of, 66, 67, 123, 124

League of Nations, Siam refrains from supporting vote of censure on Japan, 63

"New Order", disastrous effects of Siam's association with, 138, 139

Pro-Japanese party in Siam, 125, 126

Reluctance of Siamese Government to take sides in Anglo-Japanese conflict of interests, 63, 65, 122-127

Siam declares war on Britain and U.S.A., 136, 137, 138, 147

Siamese goodwill mission to Japan, 66, 105

Siamese Government allows passage of Japanese troops across Siam, 130, 131

Siamese Government decides to collaborate with Japan, 133

Siamese impressed by military strength of Japan, 67

Siamese Prime Minister orders cessation of resistance to Japanese troops, 130

Siamese students sent to Japan, 54, 94

Treaty of 1898, 19, 62

Treaty of Non-Aggression of 1940, 56, 57

Treaty of offensive and defensive alliance of 1941, 134, 135, 145

K

Kambaeng Bejra, Prince of (see under Purachatra, Prince)

Ranchanaburi, 9

Kedah, 7, 9, 17, 18, 53, 57, 113, 114, 115

Kelantan, 7, 17, 18, 57, 113, 114, 115

Keng Tung, 7, 114, 115, 130

Khmers, 12, 13, 14, 26

Korat, 8

Kovid Abhaiyongs, Luang, 106, 166, 167, 168

Kra Canal, 68, 69

Kratt, 60

L

Lampun, 12

Laos, The, 11

Law—

Modernisation of legal and judicial systems, 23

Old customary law of Siam, 23

Promulgation of Legal Codes, 23, 55

Laos, French Protectorate of, 11, 111

League of Nations, 63, 82, 108

Literature, 27, 28

Local Government, reform of, 83

Luang Prabang, 14, 16, 17, 18, 60, 124

Lvo (Lophuri), 12

M

Malaya—

Malay population in South Siam, 13

Siamese claims in the Malay Peninsula, 57, 58, 112-115

Manila, students sent to, 95

Manopakorn, Phya, 79, 86, 103, 108

Mekong River as frontier, 117, 118, 120

Merguy, 113

Military security, problem of, 157-161

Missionaries—

American Presbyterian mission, 40

French Roman Catholic missionaries, 40, 119

Möng Pan, 7, 114, 115

Mongkut, King, 18, 19, 21, 32, 33, 34, 48, 50

Möns, 12, 13, 26

N

Nagor Svarga, Prince of (see under Paribatra, Prince)

Nakhon Lampang, 9, 130

Nanchao (Thai kingdom of), 12

Narai, King, 16

Naresuen, King, 15

Narisra, Prince, 48, 80

Nationalism (see also under Economic nationalism), 51, 96, 97, 98

Natural resources, 8

Navy, 98, 99, 105, 167

Netherlands—

Internment of Netherlands nationals of white race, 136, 140

Internment of staff of Netherlands Legation, 131, 136, 143

Netherlands—

- Netherlands Chargé d'Affaires, 131, 143
- Netherlands community, 40
- Netherlands East Indies, 2, 157, 159, 164
- Neutral policy of Siam (see under Foreign policy)
- Neutrality of Siam, failure to defend, 144-147

O

- Occupations in Siam, 23, 24
- Origins of Siamese people, 11-13

P

- Pacific Regional Council, 161, 162, 163
- Pak Chan, River, 9
- Pan-Thai movement, 13, 107, 111, 112
- Paribatra, Prince, 48
- Patani, 16, 17, 18, 128
- Peck, Mr. Willys, 130, 131
- Pegu, 14, 16
- Penang, 8, 9, 10, 53, 113, 114
- People's Assembly, 79, 84, 85, 86, 88, 167
- People's Party, 84
- Perlis, 7, 18, 57, 113, 114, 115
- Personalities—
 - In the old Siam, 45-49
 - In the new Siam, 100-110
- Phahol Pholphayuha Sena, Phya, 79, 80, 82, 83, 86, 87, 88, 95, 103, 104-105, 106, 108, 166
- Phaulkon, Constantine, 16
- Philippine Islands, students sent to, 54, 95
- Physiography of Siam, 7, 8
- Pibul Songgram, Field-Marshal Luang, 80, 82, 83, 86, 87, 88, 89, 96, 97, 99, 100, 101-103, 105, 106, 107, 108, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 138, 139, 144, 145, 146, 147, 166, 167, 168
- Pitsanuloke, Prince of (see under Chakrabongse, Prince)
- Political parties forbidden, 84
- Population, 7, 13
- Portuguese contacts with Ayuthia, 16
- Pradist Manudharm, Luang, 83, 87, 88, 103-104, 110, 168
- Prajadhipok, King, 20, 32, 33, 38, 45, 46, 48, 49, 77, 78, 80, 86, 95, 100-101
- Prayoon Bhamorn Montri, Colonel, 107
- Press of Siam, 25, 84
- "Promoters" of the *Coup d'état*, 79, 80, 81, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 96, 97, 100
- Purachatra, Prince, 48

R

- Rabi, Prince, 48
- Railways, 8, 40, 41
- Ram Khamheng, King of Sukhothai, 14, 70
- Rama VI, King, 20, 21, 23, 32, 33, 35, 36, 38, 40, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48, 77, 94, 95
- Rama Thibodi I, King, 14
- Regional Council for the Pacific (see under Pacific Regional Council)
- Religion (see also under Buddhism), 28, 29
- Renong, 9
- Repatriation of British, American and Netherlands nationals, 142, 143
- Revolution of June 24th, 1932 (see under *Coup d'état*)
- Roman Catholic missionaries, 40, 119
- Russia, 159

S

- Sakol Varavarn, Prince, 109
- Saovabha Pongsri, Queen, 46
- Schools, Chinese (see under Education)
- Security (see under Economic security and Military security)
- Shans, 11
- Shan States, 12, 111, 115
- "Siam" and "Siamese" replaced by "Thailand" and "Thai", 112
- Siam and the Great Powers, 50-52
- Siam, old and new, comparison between, 43, 44
- Siamese people, origins of, 11-13
- Siemrap, 18, 59, 60, 118
- Sindhu Songgramjaya, Vice-Admiral Luang, 105, 166, 168
- Singapore, 8, 9, 123, 133
- Singora, 9, 128
- Sisiphon, 118
- Social conditions, 23-26
- Song Suradej, Colonel Phya, 86
- Sri Dharma Dhibez, Chao Phya, 108, 166
- Sri Sena, Phya, 108, 166
- Sri Visarn Vacha, Phya, 108
- Standard of living, 163, 164
- Strategic importance of Siam, 9, 10, 150, 151
- Students sent abroad (see under Education)
- Succession to the Throne, 21, 22
- Sukhothai—
 - Absorption by Ayuthia, 15
 - Capture by Thais from Khmers, 14

Sukhothai--

- Foundation of, 14
- King Ram Khamheng of, 14, 70
- Sumptuary regulations, 26

T

- Tak Sin, Phya (King of Dhonburi), 17
- Tariff system, reform of, 83
- Tavoy, 9, 15, 16, 17, 18, 113
- Tenasserim, 15, 16, 17, 18, 113
- Thai family of peoples, 11-13
- "Thailand" and "Thai" substituted for "Siam" and "Siamese", 112
- Thatôn, 12
- Titles in Siam, 22, 23, 110
- Travel in the old Siam, 40, 41
- Treaties with Foreign Powers, 2, 18, 19, 39, 51, 54-57, 60, 62, 83, 95, 118, 134, 135, 145
- Trengganu, 7, 17, 18, 57, 113, 114, 115

U

U.S.A. and Siam--

- American advisers, 37, 38, 98
- American community, 40
- American Presbyterian mission, 40
- Internment of staff of U.S.A. Legation, 131, 136, 143
- Internment of U.S.A. citizens, 136, 140, 143
- Siam's declaration of war on U.S.A., 136, 137, 138, 145, 147
- Siamese faith in disinterestedness of U.S.A., 159

U.S.A. and Siam--

- Students sent to U.S.A., 54, 95
- U.S. Minister (Mr. Willys Peck), 130, 131
- U Thong, 14

V

- Vajiravudh, King (see under Rama VI)
- Varnvaidya Varavarn, Prince, 108-109
- Vichitr Vadhakarn, Luang, 107-108, 132
- Victoria Point, 9
- Vientiane (Wieng Chan), 17, 18, 60, 124

W

War--

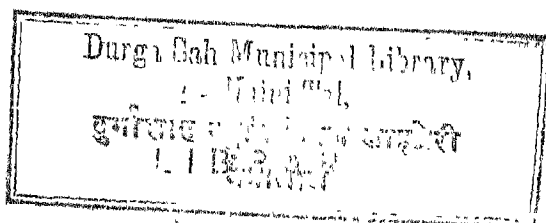
- Circumstances attending Siam's declaration of war, 144, 147-149
- Declaration of war by Siam on Britain and U.S.A., 136, 137, 138, 145, 147
- How war came to Siam, 128-139
- World War of 1914-1918, Siam sides with Allied Nations, 20, 43
- Western prestige in Asia, 1, 2, 3
- Wieng Chan (see under Vientiane)

X

- Xenophobia, 51, 52, 119, 120, 121

Y

- Yanada Nagamasa, 62
- Yomaraj, Chao Phya, 48
- "Yuvachon" (Official Youth Movement), 107, 115, 116



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